

MERIAN L. GUILFOYLE

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A RETREAT
FOR
WOMEN IN BUSINESS

In Fourteen Conferences

BY
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A RETREAT FOR WOMEN IN BUSINESS

I. INTRODUCTION

"Now is the acceptable time."—II. Cor. vi, 2.

SYNOPSIS.—1. *Though you have made a sacrifice to come here, it is God Who has arranged this Retreat for you:*

2. *That He might give you the GRACE OF CONVERSION—a grace He will not give you unless you ask Him for it.*

3. *You would not have asked Him for it in the world, so He called you into the solitude that He might speak to your heart.*

4. *To enable you to feel (1) your need of this grace and (2) His desire to give it to you, that you might ask Him for it with earnestness and confidence.*

5. *The obstacles Discouragement and Indifference should not hinder you from asking.*

6. *A concluding prayer to Our Lady for grace to make a good Retreat.*

My Dear Children in Christ:—You have come here to make a Retreat. You have left the troubles and anxieties of Martha in the world to spend the week with Mary at the feet of Jesus. And it has cost you something. Not one of you but has had to make some little sacrifice to be present here. You have made it for the one thing necessary—you have come for your soul's sake. In the name of Jesus I congratulate you; in the name of Jesus I welcome you. For remember, dear children, Jesus has had a great deal to do with it. He is more anxious to have you here than you have been to come. "You would not have sought Him," says St. Bernard, "unless He had first sought you, nor chosen Him unless He had first chosen you." His grace and love are ever beforehand with us. "In this is Charity, not as though we had loved, but because God hath first loved us" (I John iv, 10). He has a very special grace to give you,

which He could hardly give you, save by a miracle, in the world, so He has called you here. Let us call it the grace of conversion. It is not the same for you all. Perhaps not exactly the same for any two of you. But you, each of you, need it—need it desperately, for your salvation may depend upon it. It may be conversion from sin, or conversion from tepidity, or from spiritual sloth, or from vanity. Perhaps you do not know what it is you do need. But God knows, because He knows you personally and individually. For He is the Good Shepherd, Who knows His sheep and calls them by name (John x, 3), and actually now He has that grace for you and has brought you here to give it you—and give it you He will if you but ask Him for it.

Now, will you ask Him? That is the question that concerns you most now; that is the secret of His calling you here. You would not have asked Him in the world, that is quite certain; you would not have known you needed it. You have too much to do there—too many other things to think about and distract you. The roar and racket of the streets, the jangle of the car bells, the all-pervading whirr of machinery indoors and the incessant clickety-click of the restless typewriter and the thousand other sounds of business life make such a noise even in your spiritual ears that Our Lord might say to you now what He once said to St. Teresa: "I would speak to many souls, but the world makes so much noise in their hearts that they could not hear me." So He calls you here, where there is no noise and nothing to distract you. You come into the stillness and quiet of this solitude and Jesus is here waiting for you, as He waited for the woman at the well. You can see, though she did not, how lovingly He arranged that meeting for her. Some day you will see how lovingly He has arranged this meeting for you, though perhaps you hardly see it now. She was coming for water, as she

came every day, at her own time and convenience. She was not seeking Jesus; but He, the Good Shepherd, was seeking her, His lost sheep. He has the grace of conversion for her, but she must ask Him for it, and He must lead her to ask Him. It is a lovely scene. He begins by putting Himself under an obligation to her. "Give Me to drink," He says to her. And then, when she is thus at her ease with Him and can speak unreservedly, with what divine gentleness and familiarity He talks to her; how sweetly He bears with her waywardness and perversity, until at last He wins her and she asks Him for his grace—as He wants her to.

Now the same Jesus is here, I say, longing to give you this same grace of conversion He gave to her. But, like her, you must beg for it. And again I ask, will you do so? You have begun well. Jesus allows Himself to be put under an obligation by your merely coming to Him. But He wants something more. Give Me to drink, He seems to say to you. He thirsts to be thirsted for. He wants to see the earnest desire in your heart for that grace He longs to give you. You show it Him best by simply realizing that the "Master is here and He has called for you." He is here in the Blessed Sacrament, awaiting, "calling and welcoming all who come to visit Him." "Attend and see that I am God," He says to us. And we shall do that during this Retreat. Twice a day we gather round His throne for our conferences, and many times a day you will come into His presence to visit Him. I want you to think much of Him. I want to make your thoughts, as far as possible, to center round Him here in His home of love, to make the Retreat as far as may be a Retreat in honor of the Eucharist Heart of Jesus.

"What do you here?" asked the Blessed Curé of Ars of an old man he saw sitting on a bench in the church and staring at the Tabernacle. "I see you here day after day, without book, without

beads, without prayer apparently, for your lips never seem to move. What are you doing? Are you mooning away your time?" The old man's answer was an angel's song. "O father," he said quite simply, "what can I do? I look at Jesus and Jesus looks at me." There, in a sentence, is the work of our Retreat. We are here to feel that we are looking at Jesus and that Jesus is looking at us. For by doing so we shall realize best what that grace is of which we stand most in need, and so be urged to ask our loving Saviour to give it us.

Look at Jesus, then, my dear children, there in the Tabernacle for us. Understand that He is the living God, born of the Father from all eternity; the Beginning, Who also speaks to you; the God Who created you; the God Who died for you; the God Who made you His child by baptism. Then look over your past life and see whether you have succeeded or failed in the fulfilment of your obligations towards Him. "I thought upon the days of old."

Look at Jesus and think that before Him, as your just judge, you will one day have to render a strict account of your whole life, and on His sentence will depend your lot for all eternity. "I had in my mind the eternal years."

Look at Jesus and remember He is the Way, the Truth, and the Light, and unless you have His Spirit you are none of His. Examine your heart and see, during the quiet, silent days of your Retreat, how far you fall short of your divine model. "I meditated in the night with my own heart."

Look at Jesus and see what, by his grace, you might have been; feel that *He is looking at you* and that He sees what by your sins you actually are. Let that rouse you to fear and remorse, but not to despair, for:

Look at Jesus again and realize He is looking at you in mercy

and in love, and His voice is whispering to you: "Come to Me; I will refresh you." "I was exercised and I swept my spirit."

Thus shall we do the works prescribed for us by the Psalmist: "I thought upon the days of old; I had in my mind the eternal years; I meditated in the night with my own heart; I was exercised, and swept my spirit" (Ps. 76)—works especially fitted for a Retreat, as they infallibly lead to the soul's conversion; for the inspired Psalmist continues: "And I said, now have I begun; this is the change of the right hand of the Most High" (*ib.*). For to say, "*Now have I begun*," with efficacious resolution indicates a change of soul which nothing but the power of God could bring about—and only then in a soul that is willing to receive His grace.

Now, to that willingness I want you briefly to consider two obstacles—discouragement and indifference. The first says, "What is the use of it?" The second, "I don't care about it."

A word about each, and first with regard to discouragement. It will come home to you, or I hope it will, that there is a vast difference between what you might have been and what you are; between, that is, the ideal and the real "you." A Retreat, in fact, serves to impress this upon you. And, of course, it is not pleasant. For even if you have been doing, as perhaps you had imagined in all modesty, "fairly well," the Retreat points out very faithfully that you have nothing to be proud of. "When you have done all things that shall be commanded you," says our Lord, "say we are unprofitable servants." And a well-conducted Retreat (so to speak) leads us humbly to acquiesce in that decision. But now, you will say, is not such a state of things very discouraging? And one is bound to admit that in a certain sense it is discouraging. But in that sense almost everything in this fallen world is discouraging—it belongs to the nature of things. "Homo es et non angelus," says the Imita-

tion—you are human, and not an angel. You resolve on something and you honestly try to succeed, and were you an angel you would persevere, and in the end would most certainly succeed. But you are not; you are human, and in consequence you don't always persevere, and so you don't always succeed. But we must not lose our temper over it—that never does the least good. Our falls should keep us humble; but they should not discourage us.

Two men looked out of prison bars;
One saw mud, and the other, stars.

and they were both wrong. We won't get to heaven star-gazing. No; it is at times a difficult path, and we must look to our feet. But at the same time we must see something beyond our misery and our weakness. We must raise our hearts. It will never do to live with our eyes fixed forever on the mud. "I raised my eyes to the mountains, from whence help shall come unto me." Very often our discouragement is a subtle form of mere wounded vanity and disappointment. God, perhaps, is pleased with our efforts and we are not. We want something more, something to point to, something to show. Not merely "the something attempted," but "the something done." And perhaps it is so long coming that we lose patience and want to box our own ears, like poor little Alice in Wonderland.

On the other hand, St. Francis de Sales was not put out by his imperfections. No; he called them his "*dear little imperfections*," and tried again. We must face the facts. We are dreadfully weak—even the best of us—and we are, or should be, trying to be like Jesus Christ. What wonder if we at times fall short? Let me put it this way: You are behind the counter, we'll say, and an impatient customer comes in and asks for an article which you know to be in a box on a shelf just out of your reach, and somebody else has the

steps. Well, there you are. You have to keep that impatient customer waiting till you can get the steps or try your best to reach that box without them. Like an obliging young woman, you determine to try to get the box; but in vain. You can just touch the lowest edge of that box with the tip of your longest finger, but you cannot get hold of it. You are just not tall enough. Now, you might be sorry for keeping the customer waiting, but surely it would be very foolish to sit down and cry because you were three inches too short. Yet sensible people there are who bewail their spiritual shortcomings with just as little sense of spiritual proportion and the fitness of things.

Ah! but a man's reach should exceed his grasp:—

Or what's Heaven for?—(Browning.)

Heaven—that is the grace of God here and the reward of God hereafter—is just for those who are striving after something that to their natural powers is beyond reach. We, none of us, can really hope ever to be exactly like Jesus Christ, but we shall not be saved at all if we give up trying to be like Him. And so if the Retreat, like a candid friend, points out that in many things you have dismally failed, don't let it discourage you. Be quite sure that God lets us see our faults for just this one reason: not to be cast down—far from it; but to let us see the grace He will give us to overcome our faults if we ask for it.

And so we must begin our Retreat with great confidence. You must be quite sure that God loves you and wants to help you. He is not as vexed as you have been with your failures. One reason is because He did not expect from you quite as much, perhaps, as you did from yourself; and another because He does not forget your efforts, even though they came to nothing. Failures have made you angry and anxious only to forget you ever tried. But God remem-

bers that at least you did try, and thereby showed some love for Him. "For," says the Apostle, "He is not unjust that He should forget your works or the love that you have shown Him in his name" (Heb. vi, 10).

But whilst there must be no discouragement, on the other hand there must be no carelessness, no indifference. A Retreat is too precious a grace to be indifferent about. To be indifferent now may be to risk the loss of that grace on which your salvation depends. A Retreat means Jesus passing close to you, not to return with the same grace for you again. "I fear Jesus," says St. Bernard, "passing by and not returning." This is the acceptable time, the day of salvation, when God has promised to hear you and to help you. But the time is short. It will soon be over and God's special help will have gone along with it. And so it is that the Apostle is so intensely anxious about it. "We exhort you," he says, "that you receive not the grace of God in vain. For it is written: 'In an acceptable time have I heard thee: in the day of salvation have I helped thee—behold *now* is the acceptable time: behold now is the day of salvation.'" The point, you see, is this—that indifference now may lose for us that grace of conversion on which our salvation may depend. Let me show you clearly what I mean by an illustration. On the night on which our Lord began His passion two of his disciples sinned grievously against Him—Peter and Judas. To each was this grace of conversion offered. Peter accepted it and Judas refused it. Peter accepted it and became a saint—the chief of the Apostles—the Rock on which Christ built His Church—the key-bearer of the Kingdom of Heaven. But Judas—Judas took a halter and hanged himself "and went to his own place." It was entirely his own fault. The same grace that saved St. Peter was, I say, offered to him and could have saved him had he but accepted it. If

anything, it was offered to him even more lovingly and insistently than to St. Peter.

Of St. Peter it is said: "The Lord, turning, looked on Peter, and Peter remembered the word that was said to him, and, going out, he wept bitterly." But Jesus does far more for Judas. "Friend," he says to him, "whereto art thou come? Dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" If the devil had not already entered into that wretched man how could he have resisted an appeal of such tender pathos, of such infinite compassion, of such unconquerable love? But what I want you to feel, my dear children, is that it is this same grace of conversion that we are dealing with in our Retreat—the same eternal issue may be at stake for each one of you, and that issue depends on the same condition—the acceptance or rejection of it by your human will. As you care for your own immortal soul, then; as you love Jesus; as you would be a true Child of Mary; as you fear hell and long for Heaven, let me exhort you here and now to make up your mind to profit by the grace of this Retreat. Let it be a *time of true solitude*. You have separated yourself bodily from the world; let your mind be separated from it, too. Say to your worldly distractions on the threshold of your Retreat: "Stay you here whilst I go yonder and pray." A *time of thought*, when you look on Jesus and give your soul a chance—"Attend and see that I am God." A *time of prayer*, when you feel that Jesus is looking at you and disclosing His Spirit to you. "I will hear what the Lord shall say unto me"—but not coldly or indifferently, but with earnestness and eager longing. "Speak, Lord, for Thy servant heareth."

Once, when our Lord was passing out from Jericho, there sat at the gate of the city a blind man begging. And he asked what was the meaning of the tumult, and they told him Jesus of Nazareth was passing by. At once that poor blind man saw his opportunity. Here

was the miracle worker—the one man in all the world who could heal his blindness. And he was passing by—going with haste away from him, perhaps never to return. Think of that blind man's eagerness. "Jesus, Son of David," he cries, "have mercy on me." And those that went before bade him hold his peace and rebuked him. But the more they rebuked him so much the more, a great deal, did he cry out, Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me. And at last Jesus hears him and bids them bring him to Him. And then, "What wilt thou that I should do for thee?" He asks. "Lord," says that blind man, "that I may see." And Jesus answered him: "Receive thy sight; thy faith hath made thee whole." And the man saw and followed after, glorifying God (Mark x, 46; Luke xvii, ad fin.).

In that blind man I want you to see a model for your eagerness. Jesus of Nazareth in very truth is passing close by you now, perhaps never to return. Do be alive to the opportunity that will soon be over of getting rid of the spiritual maladies of your soul. "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." Spiritual sloth, tepidity or a clinging still to past sin may bid you hold your peace; but for God's sake be in earnest; so much the more a great deal do you cry out: "Jesus, Son of David, have mercy on me." And He who has come so close to you that you might cry to Him—He Who gives you the inspiration to cry to Him—will assuredly hear you. Yes, some time during the Retreat, when you are at your spiritual reading, when you are kneeling before the Blessed Sacrament, when you are listening to the conference, Jesus will speak to you: "What will you that I do for you?" Again let the answer of the blind man be yours: "Lord, that I may see"—that I may see You, that I may see myself. That I may see You—all that You are to me, all that You have done for me, that I may love You—and then that I may see myself, my sins, my ingratitude, my utter selfishness, to despise myself and to

rise to higher things. "Lord, that I may know Thee—that I may know myself."

And can you doubt the answer of the Sacred Heart? Oh, surely just in proportion to your eagerness will the fulness of His grace fill your soul. "Receive thy sight—thy faith hath made thee whole." And you, too, by the grace of your Retreat will see and follow after, glorifying God—here by preaching Him by a life modeled on the example of the virtues of His Sacred Heart, and hereafter by praising, thanking and loving Him for all eternity in Heaven.

That this may be so let us put our Retreat under the protection of Mary. Let us say to her from our hearts: "O Mary, my mother, help me. Teach me to hear God's word and keep it." Help me to learn of you to profit by the near presence of Jesus during this Retreat. Keep my ears shut to the distractions and whisperings of the world, but open to the words of my Saviour. This, my mother, is to be the day of my salvation, the day which the Lord has made for me. Let me profit by it. Let me not receive this great grace in vain. Teach me to open my soul to the words, the thoughts, the impulses of the Divine Spirit. And, like you, to keep all these things jealously, thankfully, lovingly, pondering them in my heart. Amen.

II. SIN

"Know thou and see that it is an evil and bitter thing for thee to have left the Lord thy God."—Jer. ii, 19.

SYNOPSIS.—I. *In what sense sin is "leaving the Lord our God."*

2. *People in world do not "know" and "see" it is an evil. Hence God's punishments make no impression.*

a. *Fall of angels.*

b. *Adam's fall.*

c. *Crucifixion.*

d. *Hell.*

3. *Living in world, you are in danger of admitting its spirit. Hence God calls us to Retreat that we may "know" and "see" the evil and bitterness of sin.*

4. *Here we are in His Presence Who is "Our Creator" and Our Redeemer. Our attitude should be that of repentant sinners, for we have offended Him.*

a. *AS OUR CREATOR.—Sin is a rebellion and defiance of Him. In this lies its EVIL.*

b. *AS OUR REDEEMER.—Sin is an act of base ingratitude towards Him Who died for us. In this lies its BITTERNESS.*

We can never leave God. "If I ascend into heaven, Thou art there. If I descend into hell, Thou art there. If I take my wings early in the morning and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea, even there Thy hand shall lead me and Thy right hand hold me" (Ps. cxxxviii, 8, 9). Yet God regards the heart, and when a sinner wishes in his heart to be away from God that he might sin, then that sinner is to God as the prodigal "who went into a *distant country*." Sin, then, is leaving the Lord our God, in thought and affection; and the prophet would have us "know" and "see" that this is "an evil and bitter thing." We need serious and prayerful thought to realize this profitably in our souls.

The world makes light of sin, and of God's punishment of sin, for

the very reason that it makes no effort to consider these things. "With desolation is the whole world desolate because no one thinketh in his heart" (Jer. xii, 11). "He was in the world and the world was made by Him and the world knew Him not," for the majority of men and women do not trouble to think about Him. They do not "attend and see that He is God." He is not for them a Personal Being, Whose punishment they fear and Whose approval they prize. For them it practically is as if He were not. And as they ignore Him they think nothing of offending Him and despise His punishments. They have imbibed the poison of the devil's lie to our first parents.

"You shall not die the death." And it has made them utterly irresponsible and entirely defiant. "We have sinned," they cry, "and what harm hath befallen us?" And because God hath spared them, they despise the "riches of His goodness and patience and long suffering." But God is not mocked; nor hath He left Himself without witness of His hatred for sin. Our first parents did die the death; and we are all condemned to death for their sin. The angels of heaven, the greatest of His created beings, were for sin hurled from their lofty thrones into the depth of hell. "I saw satan, like lightning, fall from heaven," said our Blessed Lord. And most of all does "Christ crucified" preach trumpet-tongued to man from His every wound "the evil and bitterness of sin," There does the wisdom of God deign to become our Teacher. How can worldlings look on their Saviour dying for sin upon the Cross and say that sin is a small matter in the eyes of God. How can they flatter themselves that they can sin with impunity? If "God hath spared not His only begotten Son," what will become of sinners? "Weep not for Me," said Christ to the sorrowing women, "but weep for yourselves. For if in the green wood they do these things, what will they

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do in the dry?" If the strict justice of God demanded the death of a God-made man as an adequate atonement for sin, how can man say hell is too great a punishment for the sinner who defies his God by his sin, and dies in rebellion against Him? And yet outside the Church of Christ men nowadays will brook no allusion to hell. They resent the mention of it as an insult to good taste. Hell is out of date, it is obsolete, it is medieval. Priests were ridiculed for pointing to the disasters at St. Pierre, at Messina, and the wreck of the Titanic, as punishments from God. Let us be quite clear. It is true they may not have been punishments. "No man hath known the mind of the Lord and no one hath been His counsellor." We know that. And it may have been but a coincidence, merely, that these disasters should in each separate instance have followed fast on sins that cried to heaven for vengeance. I say it may have been a coincidence merely. It is a matter of evidence, and we can form our own opinion, and I know what I think. But when these critics speak as though these disasters were too great a punishment for sin, and worse than the sins themselves, then we can only conclude that they have not profitably studied the lessons of the Crucifix.

For in that school of Christ Crucified we can learn with St. Augustine that if the whole world were suddenly destroyed by some violent convulsion of nature, and every man, woman and child living in it were annihilated, that disaster, frightful and appalling though it might be, could not in God's sight equal the disaster of one single mortal sin committed only in thought. To repair the ruin of a destroyed world God had but to speak a word: by a word He had made it; by a word He could remake it; but to repair the disaster of one mortal sin the Son of God, obedient to His Father's Will, must needs come down from heaven and die a shameful death upon the Cross. And yet men with the crucifix before them, men

and women calling themselves Christians, commit mortal sin and never give it a thought. They sin and sin again; they drink in iniquity like water, yet they eat and drink, they go to rest, they rise to work or play again, as though nothing had happened.

My children, what can be the explanation of it except just this: that men will not think. As of old, so now God sends His preachers to make men think. "Cry out, cease not," He says to them. "Let your voice sound like a trumpet; tell the men of Juda their sins, and the people of Israel their iniquities" (Is. lviii, 1). God wants to warn them and to save them. But, alas! over how many has He now to weep as once He wept over Jerusalem. "How have I longed to gather thee as a hen gathered her chickens under her wing; and thou wouldst not." They heed not their Saviour. They pass their lives in eating and drinking, and in a moment they go down to hell. Such is the spirit of the children of the world, and such is the destruction that threatens them.

Now, dear children in Christ, you live in the world and there is danger of your inhaling the tainted atmosphere of its spirit, this moral poison of thinking lightly of sin. It would be the beginning of your spiritual decay. God has called you to this retreat perhaps for this reason above the rest to warn you against it; to renew in your soul a healthy horror of mortal sin; to let you see it in the way as He sees it; to convince you once and for ever of its intrinsic evil and its cruel bitterness. He has called you here into His presence. He has gathered you round His Sacramental Throne where "He, the Merciful and Gracious Lord, gives to them that fear Him the Food wherein He has left a Memorial of all His wonderful works." For He is Himself that Food. "I am the living Bread that came down from heaven." We are looking, then, at Jesus. At Jesus, the God-made Man, our Creator and our Re-

deemer; the great God that made us and the loving God who died for us. These are His works for us, the works of which He is Himself the Living Memorial in that Blessed Sacrament, and we have sinned against Him. We have all sinned and do need the grace of God. We have lived in the world, and like the world we have forgotten God. But now at least when we are in His presence and call to mind all that He has done for us we should, like His great servants, feel abashed and awestruck before Him. Jacob after the vision, Moses at the burning bush, Elias on the mountain side, have bowed them low and trembled when they knew that God was near. "Depart from me," cries Peter, realizing that Jesus was God. "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Before that same God are we now assembled. Surely our only attitude can be that of the contrite and humbled sinner wishing to do penance for sin. When the proud and self-sufficient Pharisees came to John entirely devoid of this spirit they were sternly reminded of what was wanting in them. "Ye brood of vipers who hath shewn ye to flee from the wrath to come. Bring forth, therefore, works worthy of penance, and think not to say: 'We have Abraham for our father,' for I tell you of these stones could God raise up children to Abraham. Whose fan is in His hand and He will most thoroughly cleanse His floor. And the wheat He will gather into His barn, but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire" (Matt. iii, 7, seqq.). Let us be warned, then, and come to our God in penance and humility of heart. He is our Creator, and by sin we have rebelled against Him: this is the *evil* of mortal sin. He is our Redeemer, and we have despised Him: this is the bitterness of mortal sin.

"Despisest thou," asks the Apostle, "the riches of His goodness and patience and long suffering, knowest thou not that the benignity of God leadeth thee to penance" (Rom. ii, 4). The benignity of

God in creating us should move us to penance. They who cry, "We have sinned, and what evil hath befallen us, despise the riches of His goodness." Let our cry rather be, "I have sinned, and indeed I have offended; I have not received what I have deserved, for by my sin I actually defied and rebelled against the God, whose love had created me and bestowed on me all I had, and Whose power alone sustained me even in my sin." When you come to die, my children, the priest will recommend your soul to God in the words of the Ritual, "Remember, she is *Thy creature*, not made by strange gods but by Thee the only true God." And each day holy Church makes the same plea for mercy in her office. "Let us weep before the Lord *Who made us*, for He is the Lord our God and we are His people and the sheep of His pasture" (Ps. 94). It reminds God of His love for us. For only out of love could God have made us. Unaided reason might have told us this, but God's word has set it beyond a doubt: "With an everlasting love have I loved thee, *therefore* have I drawn thee taking pity on thee." It was because He loved us with an everlasting love that He has drawn us out of our nothingness and created us. And He has made us so that He must be ever near us. "He made me and placed His hand upon me." Yes! nearer than a mother is to her child is the great God to your soul. "Can a mother forget her child so as not to have pity upon it? yea, though she should forget I will not forget thee!" His hand must ever be upon us. His mind must ever be thinking of us, or we should cease to be. Creation has brought our God so near to us that, as the Apostle says, "In Him we move and live and have our being."

As a bird in the air, as a fish in the sea, so is your soul in the hand of God. Now, do we realize this? Had we lived by our faith and understood we were in God's hand, should we have dared to sin?

For sin is defying God. Sin is, as we have seen, rebelliously leaving the Lord our God in thought and affection. The devil holds up some forbidden fruit which he knows will allure our concupiscence, our evil propensities, our bad desires; a means of taking revenge, an opportunity of acquiring an unjust gain, the gratification of our sensuality: like Eve our passion sees the fruit, that it is fair to the eye and good to the taste and beautiful to behold, and longs to possess it. Conscience, which is the echo of the voice of God, forbids it, "Thou shalt not." Then comes the pause and the struggle: a hesitation, less and less as the sinner hardens in sin, but always sufficient to allow the will to make a conscious choice of evil, and in that deliberate choice of a great evil is mortal sin. "I know that it is wrong; I know, great God, that Thou dost say, 'Thou shalt not'; but I am my own master, I can do as I like, and I tell Thee that I will." "They have broken my yoke, they have burst my hands, they have said, 'I will not serve.'"

Now, I say, were God really at a distance in the far off heavens, as the sinner imagines Him to be, this would still be bad enough. But, remember, even when you sin, God is holding you. In very truth you sin in the hand of God. Not merely in His presence or under his eye, but whilst he holds you helpless in His hand.

God took his prophet Jeremias and shewed him the potter working at his wheel. He was fashioning vessels out of clay. But one piece was hard and would not fashion. The potter tried to mould it, but failed. At last, losing patience, he cast it from him and it broke into a thousand fragments. And said God to his prophet, "Cannot I do with you, O House of Israel, as the potter with his clay?" (Jer. xviii, 6).

You are His, remember, body and soul. You belong to Him, for He made you. "What hast thou that thou hast not received, and

if thou hast received, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received it?" I. Cor. iv, 7). And if you harden your heart against Him, if you will not let Him fashion you as He wishes, if you turn a deaf ear to His inspirations, may not that word be said to you, "Can not I do with thee as the potter with his clay?" "He has lifted you up with infinite love," drawing you out of nothingness, taking pity on you with infinite love, holding and supporting you in your existence. If you defy Him, I say, can not he cast you down? And if He has not done so, is it not because he loves you and wants to pardon you? And should not this goodness of your Creator move you to penance?

When, by a holy device, the saintly hermit Paphnucius had made the sinful woman Thais understand that all her sins had been committed in the presence of God, she was filled with shame and remorse. She threw herself in bitterest grief at his feet and asked how she could ever atone to God for the scandal of her wicked life. He gave her a great penance. At his command she gathered together all her possessions: her robes, her ornaments, her treasures, the rewards of her sin, and of them all she made a great bonfire in the square of the city, which her life had scandalized. Then she followed him into the desert where he prepared a cell for her, in which she passed the remaining three years of her life in awful austerity. And he gave her as a penance to say this prayer: "Thou who has fashioned me, have mercy on me." It was the only prayer she had the courage to say. She dare not call on the name of God, she felt too keenly her unworthiness. She could plead no one good act in all her life of sin. But this she could say; this she could plead, she was the work of God's hand: "Thou who has fashioned me, have mercy on me." And we can plead that, too, we too have sinned. We make no *boast* of being His children: as the Jews boasted they were

children of Abraham. We have lost all right to that, but we are His creatures still, and if His benignity moveth us to penance, we can hope for pardon now. "Let us weep before the Lord that made us, for He is the Lord our God, and we are his people and the sheep of His pasture."

But now besides the evil of rebellion we must see in sin the bitterness of ingratitude. "Hear, oh ye heavens, and give ear, oh earth, for the Lord hath spoken, 'I have brought up children and exalted them, and they have despised Me'" (Is. i, 2). If God so felt the bitterness of sin under the old law, how keenly must He feel it now. Has He not manifested his love by acts expressed in terms of human tenderness? "My thoughts toward you," He had said, "are thoughts of peace." These thoughts, though indeed thoughts of love, were hidden in the bosom of God. But when the fulness of time was come and God sent His Son, then was that love at last made manifest. "The goodness and kindness of God our Saviour hath appeared" (Tim. iii, 4).

It appeared in the manger at Bethlehem, in the workshop at Nazareth, in the hamlets of Galilee, in the streets of Jerusalem, and above all, on the Cross of Calvary. "And we have seen it" and have known it was the love of God for us. "He hath loved me and delivered Himself for me." Poor Jesus! As St. Alphonsus sighs, He had thought to draw us with the cords of Adam. "When I shall be lifted up I shall draw all things unto Me." And yet when He was lifted up, when He had manifested His love by dying upon the Cross for us, though the sun was darkened and the rocks were rent and all nature was thrown into confusion, man remained callous and unmoved, nay, scoffing and defiant. And what has been our attitude? "They who sin grievously crucify again to themselves the Son of God, making Him a mockery." In heart and desire, as

far as in you lay, you have taken part in this cruel outrage against your God. With the Jews you have cried, "We will not have this man to rule over us. We have no king but Caesar."

Not God, but Mammon. Not Jesus, but my passion, my pride, my impurity. Let these rule over me. Away with Jesus. "Crucify Him! Crucify Him!" "Crucifying again to themselves the Son of God, making Him a mockery." Worse than the Jews, for "had they known they would never have put to death the King of Glory." You have known. You are a child of the Faith whom God Himself has enlightened. And oh, how bitterly has God felt it. "Had an enemy done this," He cries, "I could well have borne it; but that you, one who has broken sweetmeats with Me." Ah! that has been hard to bear. "Hear, O ye heavens, and give ear, ye earth, I have brought up children and exalted them, and they have despised Me." Oh, think how the good God has brought you up and exalted you. Recall to mind the Church of your home and of your childhood. See there the font where you were baptized. God made you His child there. He rescued you from hell and without any merit on your part gave you a strict right to heaven. There in that confessional He cleansed your soul from its stains and washed it in His own most precious Blood: how generously and how often! And at those altar rails He prepared for you the banquet "containing in itself all sweetness," feeding your needy soul with that Bread that came down from heaven, His own Body and Blood. And after all this and a thousand other manifestations of an infinitely tender love He has to lament and cry, "They have despised Me." That is what we have done when we sinned. "Hear, oh ye heavens and give ear, ye earth, I have brought up children and exalted them, and they have despised Me." Despised our God. My dear children, think of this. Consider and see what an evil and bitter thing it is

for thee to have left the Lord thy God. I leave you now in the presence of your God, your Creator and your Redeemer. Remember just as, if repentant, we can plead that we are His creatures and be sure of obtaining pardon from our Creator, so even more efficaciously still can we plead the Precious Blood with our Redeemer and hope for Mercy.

III. JUDGMENT

"According to thy hardness and impenitent heart thou treasurest up to thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the just judgment of God. Who will render to every man according to his works."—Rom. ii, 5, 6.

SYNOPSIS.—(1) *If the Benignity of God as our "First Beginning" (Our Creator and Redeemer who has borne with the rebellion and ingratitude of our sins) move us not to Penance—the Apostle would urge upon us the Motive of Fear—God is our Last End—Who one day will judge us and decide our eternal years. Now to do penance, i. e.:*

(2) *TO MAKE CONFESSION of sin now is EASIER than to await that trial at the end, for*

(a) *IN CONFESSION (1) God is All Mercy and Love—anxious to pardon the sinner. (2) The penitent sinner is listened to with gentleness and sympathy: (i) His good works are not examined; (ii) His evil deeds recounted by himself; (iii) His excuses allowed; (iv) He is assured of pardon.*

(b) *BUT AT THE JUDGMENT—(1) God is simple Justice: The Soul's Master demanding an account of its Stewardship. (2) The sinner is treated as an enemy and is not listened to. But the devil "sifts" (i) His good works; (ii) His sins; (iii) His excuses; (iv) And shows him unworthy of pardon.*

"We have thought upon the days of old"—of God as our Creator and Redeemer—and "the evil and bitterness of leaving Him when we have sinned against Him. Thus has God spoken to us as our Beginning. "The Beginning Who also speaks to you." Now we must think of Him as our Last End, the Judge Who will decide our lot for all Eternity—"I had in my mind the Eternal Years." It is the continuation of the Apostle's thought: "Knowest thou not," we have heard him saying, "the Benignity of God moveth thee to penance?" And should it fail of doing so, he goes on to try in the words of my text to urge us with the motive of fear: "According to thy hardness and impenitent heart thou treasurest up for thyself wrath against the day of wrath and revelation of the just judgment

of God. Let us be quite sure God's Judgment—"the revelation of God," is awaiting the impenitent. Our sins must be revealed either now, in our own day, by ourselves, in the confessional, or hereafter on the Day of the Lord, before the whole world at the Tribunal of Justice. There is no other alternative. We must make confession of our sins now or await the Judgment of God hereafter. And can we hesitate which to choose? We may not like Confession—who does? But surely it is much easier than to face the Judgment of God. The very attitude of the sinner which disarms the anger of God, secures it's being easier. For in Confession he comes in humility; he acknowledges himself a rebel against his lawful master—an ungrateful son to the best of Fathers. He strikes his breast and cries, "Oh God, be merciful to me, a sinner." And God "renders to him" not "according to his works," but according to his contrition—if that be perfect, then is he perfectly forgiven. In the eyes of God he is justified. The loving Father receives his prodigal son to the kiss of peace and restores to him his lost inheritance. "Come to Me, you that labor and are heavy burdened, and I will refresh you." Trusting to this invitation, and relying upon this promise, the sinner comes with confidence to the "Throne of Grace" and is received at once with tenderest love and kindest sympathy. His good works are not examined! His evil deeds are recounted by himself, in his own way, in his own order, with his own explanations, his own coloring—nay, even with his own excuses. He knows little of the consequences of his sins and perhaps hardly gives that matter a thought. And throughout his confession he is buoyed up with the consciousness that according to his sincerity is the certainty of his pardon and forgiveness. "Come and accuse Me," saith the Lord; "if your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow."

You see all is made easy for the returning sinner now. All is

mercy and gentleness, because he is humbled and repentant. Look now at the unforgiven sinner at the bar of Divine Justice. Here, alas, all is changed! He dies in rebellion against the Master. He comes into the presence of God with the battle cry of hell upon his lips: "I will not serve."

And God is now the God of Justice, Who without vindictiveness, indeed, but yet with rigorous justice, will render to every man according to his works. The sinner comes now as God's enemy and, strictly, as God's enemy he will be treated. His works, both the good and the bad, will be most searchingly examined; his excuses most jealously sifted, and all the consequences of his sins ascertained and apportioned with rigorous exactness. I want this evening, to bring this trial home to you. Do not let us think it is imaginary. We have not, it is true, any precise data for forming a full and complete picture of all that will actually take place, but we do know this: That there will be a Judgment—a trial and a sentence, in some way, as we understand it. "It is appointed unto man once to die, and after this the Judgment" (Heb. ix, 27). And God surely would not have inspired his Apostle to use that word, did He not wish to convey the idea which that word usually has for us. Let us think, then, of the Judgment, this trial and this sentence. And, first, of the trial: to urge us to take advantage now of the Tribunal of Mercy, which is still open to us, and so avoid hereafter the rigors of the Tribunal of Justice.

The sinner then closes his eyes in this world, to open them upon his Judge in the next. That Judge is Jesus—the same Jesus, the same Lord before Whom we are gathered in this Chapel, but Who comes then as Master. For (if we dare to say it) God has at last asserted Himself. Hitherto He had been the hidden God, the gentle Jesus, the patient Lover of souls, the God Shepherd seeking

his lost sheep. But He has searched, He has pleaded, He has waited in vain. And now the time of mercy is over. "I have called to them and they have not heard Me; *they shall* seek Me, but they shall die in their sins." And so He comes to assert Himself as Master now. "Give an account of thy stewardship, for now thou canst be steward no longer." It is the voice of the soul's Creator, and the soul will rise to obey. Prepared or unprepared, it will go to meet its God, nor can the sinner hinder it. "Man hath not power to stop the spirit, neither hath he power in the day of death." And that sinner, rebellious, impenitent, ungrateful, must stand alone before the God he has so grievously offended.

Oh! what trembling there shall be
When the world its Judge shall see
Coming in dread Majesty.

May God save us from the face of His anger! May He grant that the Church's commendation of our soul be heard in our behalf. „May Jesus Christ appear to thee with a mild and joyful countenance and appoint thee a place amongst those who shall stand before Him forever." "For what shall I do," cries Holy Job, "when Thou shalt rise to judge?" "They shall call upon the mountains to cover them," says Our Blessed Lord. Nay He tells us of men on that Day "withering away for fear" in expectation of what shall come upon the world. "Withering away for fear." You have seen men tremble, doubtless—you have seen a man, may be, his brow beaded with sweat in an agony of fear—but neither you nor I, have seen, or heard of, nor can it enter in our minds to conceive a fear so great as to cause men actually "to wither away."

And yet the God of Truth assures us that such fear will possess those who see the Lamb in His wrath. "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb. 10, 31). Yes, God is at last

and finally the Master. Hitherto Mammon had been the sinner's Master—the World, Money, Pleasure had been the Master—and God “had borne with much patience the vessel fitted for destruction,” but “God is not mocked” and now the traitor stands before his Insulted King—his outraged God to give an account of his conduct. “Oh death, how bitter is the remembrance of thee to a man that hath peace in his possessions.” His possessions sufficed for him; he could do without God. He was at peace. His wealth had usurped the place of God in his heart. And now comes the dreadful awakening. Give an account of thy stewardship, for now thou canst be steward no longer.” Never till he heard that summons had he even thought of this. He is, after all, then only a steward. His possessions belong to Another. His lands—his Crops, his Merchandise, his Money—these things which he possessed in peace—which he administered as he listed—saying perhaps in his soul “Cannot I do as I like with my own?”—these things it appears now are not his own. They belonged to God and he was but the steward of them. Nay, more alarming still, the very members of his body—the organs of his senses, the faculties of his soul—what are all these but talents to be traded with “till He come.” “What hast thou that thou hast not received, and if thou hast received, why dost thou glory as if thou hadst not received?” And again and most emphatically “You are not your own; you are bought with a Great Price”—the price, namely, of the Precious Blood of Jesus.

I am supposing the judgment of an unrepentant sinner—but the words will be addressed to us, too: Give an account of thy stewardship. Now how are we discharging our duty in this respect? God's claims are really more urgent upon us than upon such sinners. For if the world is inexcusable for forgetting God, how much more so are we? By Baptism we are called, and actually are, the Children

of God—and every time we receive a Sacrament—every time we have assisted at Holy Mass—every time we have been present at any of the Church's Ceremonies we are reminded of it, for in thus using our *rights*, we acknowledge our *duties* as "Children of God." What double shame for us then, if enjoying the privileges of God's Children we shirk our responsibilities, and live as Children of the world, forgetful of God, and how much more rigorous an account we shall have to render of the use we have made of the "talents" which God our Master has lent to us. What could you answer were God to ask you now. "What use have you made of your eyes, your ears, your tongue, your senses, of your memory, your understanding, your will." All your powers and faculties God has given you to sanctify yourself—to make holy the Temple of God—"which you are" as the Apostle so emphatically declares. And he that violateth the temple of God, he adds: "Him shall God destroy." Now have you sanctified yourself: Or have you, God will ask, used the talents which I have lent you, as instruments of sin to offend Me?

This then is the first great difference between the tribunal of justice and the tribunal of mercy—the first reason why it is so much easier to make confession of sin now than to await the revelation of the just judgment of God hereafter. *God acts so differently.* To us *now* He is all love—anxious only to pardon us, *then* He will be nothing but Justice asserting and vindicating His long despised and neglected rights as Lord and Master over us. God Himself deigns to tell us of this change. In striking words He clearly warns us not to presume on His always taking that view of our case that we would have Him take. "Thou hast hated discipline and hast cast my words behind thee—thou thoughtest unjustly that I should be like to thee, but I will reprove thee, and set before thy

face. Understand these things, you that forget God: lest He snatch you away, and there be none to deliver you" (Ps. 49).

The second difference lies, as we have seen, in the attitude of the sinner himself. Dying unrepentant he stands before God as an enemy—and as an enemy will he be treated. No longer will the maxim hold as it held in the confessional—the sinner is to be believed in his account of himself. Nay—his own account will not even be taken—but the devil, most cruel, most cunning, most relentless of foes, will here become the accuser of the brethren. "Satan," said Christ to his Apostles, "hath desired to sift you as wheat"—*then*, was the prayer of Jesus powerful to protect them, but at this Judgment that protecting Mercy will be withdrawn—and the soul "left naked to its enemy." How will the devil sift us? What test will he make use of we know not—but the first and greatest Commandment, "Thou shalt love thy Lord, thy God, with thy whole heart," would surely suit his purpose. By it he can test our good deeds. For unless they were done for love of God they will count for little worth here. Whatever we have done, if we had not Charity, it profiteth us nothing. Our Lord warns us of the consternation of many who can point to their good deeds, but whom He will reject on that day with the words, "Amen, Amen, I say to you I know you not."

They did good deeds, but they did them not out of love for God: they did them "to be seen by men." They won the praise of men—they received their reward! and Christ has nothing to give them now. So will it fare perchance with our good actions. Maybe we take it for granted that they are all right, but unless they are stamped with the image of Christ, unless they are done for God, He will not know them. Thus the devil will sift our good actions with the test of love. And he will test our love itself by the way

we have kept the Commandments. It is the test of Jesus. "Not every one that saith to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter into the Kingdom of heaven, but he that doth the will of My Father." And again, "If you love Me, keep My Commandments." And remember it is the devil who is sifting us now, who is proving before God how we have broken His Commandments. My children, if we find it hard to confess our sins here, what will it be to be accused of them by the devil at this tribunal? No breach of any Commandment, no unforgiven sin of our whole life will be forgotten. "I will search Jerusalem with lamps and the hidden things of darkness shall be brought to light."

Each sin separate and distinct with its own peculiar malice, with its own individual black ingratitude to God, with all the special circumstances that add to its loathsomeness and malignity will be revealed with convincing clearness and triumphant hatred by this enemy of God and man. "Oh, that they would be wise and would understand and would provide for their last end." In God's name let us see what fools we are when we trust the lying promises of the devil tempting us to sin. He has one object and can have but one: to triumph over us when we come to Judgment; to *prove* that we are his slaves, that our love of God in itself has never been the sole motive of our good actions, and has not been strong enough to restrain us from sin.

Not content with thus sifting our actions—the good and the bad—the devil may now be allowed by God to sift our excuses too. "When I shall take a time I shall judge justices. St. Alphonsus explains this to mean that at the Judgment God will examine the excuses the sinner makes for his conduct, his *justices*. God may allow sinners thus to speak, that He may answer them and justify His own ways to man. And as the Psalmist says: "That thou

mayest overcome when thou are judged," God will prove in the teeth of His enemies that He has ever acted with equity and love and according to His promises.

We can not think of all the excuses of the sinner, but let me mention two. The first: "I have confessed these sins before;" and the second, "I did not realize the consequences of my sins." Both in a sense are good and urgent pleas for mercy. With regard to the first, we have already heard God's challenge to us, "Come and accuse Me; though your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made as white as snow." And we are bound to believe not to hope merely, but to *believe* that our sins are forgiven by a good confession: "I believe in the forgiveness of sins." How, then, can they appear against us at this tribunal? Clearly, and only, if there has not been a *good* confession. Let us take this thought well home to ourselves: God has never forgiven a remembered sin unless we have honestly repented of it. It remains on our souls still and God calls upon us to face the alternative—to get rid of it now during this retreat in the tribunal of penance, or to await the "Revelation of the just Judgment of God" hereafter.

I have no fear of what is called "upsetting people's conscience." A clever, though hardly an ascetic writer, has declared it is often an act of great spiritual charity to make people "jump," and I believe it is. I am talking to common sense business women, and you perfectly well understand that I am alluding now only to those confessions that through conscious and culpable carelessness were not good. Such confessions I say have not obtained forgiveness of sin. To pass over such a possibility as bad confessions during the time of retreat might easily be to expose myself to the dread rebuke: "They have healed the wound of the daughter of My people lightly. They have said, 'Peace, Peace,' where there is no peace."

It may be that the wound of your soul can not be healed lightly, that a general confession is absolutely necessary, that an occasion of sin that has become in your own estimation as necessary to your well being as your right hand, or as dear to you as your right eye, must be ruthlessly parted with. Now if such should be the case with any one of you, my dear child, let me say to you why be alarmed at it? Has not God brought you here to put it right? To bring true peace to that heart of yours that maybe has not known peace for a weary time. Think of the alternative—the Revelation at the just Judgment of God. Common sense should decide for you. But one greater than your own common sense tells you which to choose. “If thy hand scandalize thee, cut it off and cast it from thee. It is better for thee to go into life maimed than with two hands to be cast into everlasting fire.” “And if thy eye scandalize thee, pluck it out and cast it from thee; it is better for thee having one eye to enter into life than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.” Jesus, your best friend, who died to prove His friendship for you, and He who best knows all, tells you that it is *better* for you to part with an occasion of sin, a person, a place or a thing which you know will almost certainly lead you into sin—it is better for you to part with it, He says, even though the parting cost you as much pain as the cutting off of your right hand or the plucking out of your right eye. And why is it better? Because there is no forgiveness of sins without repentance—and there is no repentance without the resolution to avoid not only sin but all the dangerous occasions of sin. And therefore it is that confessions that have not included this resolution can not be urged as a plea for mercy at God’s Tribunal.

Let us glance briefly at the second excuse or plea for mercy: “I did not realize the consequence of my sin.” I think that that

must save us from the guilt of actual scandal; but let the thought of this dread trial guard us forever from any share in this devil's work of bringing sin upon the souls of others. Terrible will it be for the scandal-giver to hear at his Judgment a lost soul crying for vengeance on him as to the cause of its ruin and damnation; but more terrible still to have to answer to God for robbing Him of a soul, "I will meet thee as a bear that is robbed of her whelps." To fill us with horror of this sin God does not hesitate thus to compare ourselves to a wild beast. And Jesus in awful words has denounced this dreadful crime. "For," He says, "He that shall scandalize one of these little ones that believeth in Me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck and he were cast into the depths of the sea."

Now I say I will not think it of any one of you that you have ever intentionally harmed the soul of another. But sin is so subtle, so varied in its approach, so manifold and stealthy in its attack, that unless we are on the watch against it, we may be doing harm to our own souls or even the souls of others without our fully realizing it. "Who can understand sin," cries the Psalmist! "From my secret ones cleanse me, O Lord, and from the sins of others spare thy servant." And if we are conscious that we have not thought of these things in the past as we ought, let us resolve as David did to make amends for any harm we may even unconsciously have done to the souls of others, by helping sinners on their road to heaven in the future. It is by our prayers and good example we can best do this. "I will teach the unjust Thy ways and the wicked shall be converted unto Thee" (Ps. 50).

Though, then, the plea, "I did not realize the consequences of my sin," may save us from the awful guilt of actual scandal, we

still may have much to answer for on the score of wilful carelessness, unless we are jealously on our guard against it now.

Before the Eternal Judge passes His dreadful sentence, I want you to think now for one moment of the claim which the devil will make for the lost soul. "Just Judge," we might well imagine him saying, "this being belongs by every right to Thee. Thou hast made her and Thou hast bought her with Thy precious Blood. Graces and favors more numerous than the hairs of her head Thou hast showered upon her, but Thou hast made her free; and in spite of all Thy favors and in spite of all the many marks of Thy infinite Love she has left Thee and chosen me for her lord and master. Hadst Thou done for me one hundredth part of what Thou hast done for her I should never have been in hell—and wilt Thou give her heaven and leave me still in torments? Wilt Thou, Who hast declared that 'Thou wilt render to every man according to his works,' give her the reward of Paradise who has broken Thy Commandments and died unrepentant? Who as an unfaithful steward has used the talents of soul and body which Thou gavest her, not in Thy service but in mine? Of her own free will with which Thou hast bound Thyself never to interfere, she has chosen *me* and rejected Thee. Canst Thou in justice deny me now when I claim her body and soul as my slave for all eternity?"

My children, think it over seriously. Are you putting it in the devil's power to make such a claim against you? Jesus is looking at you from His tabernacle of love. He is warning you to beware. "To-day if you shall hear His voice, harden not your hearts."

"See, then," concludes the Apostle, "the goodness and the severity of God; towards them indeed that are fallen, the *severity*; but towards thee the goodness of God if thou abide in goodness, otherwise thou also shalt be cut off" (Rom. xi, 22).

IV. THE SENTENCE OF THE WICKED

SYNOPSIS.—(1) *The two sentences—The Sentence of Blessing. (2) The Sentence of Condemnation:*

"DEPART"—Banishment from God.

"YE CURSED."—Effect on the soul.

THE DOCTRINE OF HELL illustrated from Our Lord's parable of the "Rich Man and Lazarus."

(a) *Soul is buried in Hell.*

(b) *Soul is in torments.*

(c) *Forever.*

(d) *Its Remorse.*

(e) *Need of Faith.*

(3) *Necessity and advantages of the Fear of God.*

"Then shall the King say to them that shall be on His right hand: 'Come ye blessed of My Father, possess you the kingdom prepared for you.' Then He shall say to them also that shall be on His left hand: 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire which was prepared for the devil and his angels'" (Matt. xxv, 34-41).

Here are the two sentences as our Lord has given them, which He will pronounce, the one on the good, the other on the wicked, at the last day. We have been thinking of the judgment of the sinner, and his sentence of course will be that of condemnation. We must fear that. But we must not forget the other. For "God is not unjust that He should forget your work or the love that you have shown in His name" (Heb. vi, 6, 10). Saints have looked forward to the judgment to come. "To me," says St. Paul, "it is a very small matter to be judged by you or by man's day. He that judgeth me is the Lord" (I. Cor. iv, 4). And he gives the reason

of his confidence: "Our glory is this," he says: "the testimony of our conscience; that in simplicity of heart and sincerity of God we have conversed in this world" (II. Cor. i, 12). Could we say that we, too, should have no need to fear the Judgment. . . . I am aware, of course, of the other words of the Apostle: "It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the Living God." But good people can, and do, look forward to the Judgment for all that. For rightly understood I do not think these words were meant to apply to good men. They who "fall into the hands of the Living God" experience the shock of surprise—the words imply as much. If we are prepared for a thing, if we have been on the lookout for it beforehand, we receive no shock when it happens: it does not take us by surprise, we do not "Fall into it." And good men who have lived in the presence of God, who have rejoiced to think of His nearness, whose consolation it has been to feel that His hand was ever upon them while underneath were the Everlasting arms—how can it suddenly become for them "a fearful thing to find themselves in His hands"? No, surely, then the words are not meant for the good but as a warning to the wicked. Analogously Our Lord says that He will come as a "thief in the night," that we may so prepare that He may not be a "thief in the night" for us. "Watch ye therefore and pray."

He says "for at what hour you think not the Son of man shall come. We should not then imagine the Judgment will be for all a time of unmitigated horror. The wicked indeed "will wither away with fear," says Christ. But He adds to His followers, "When these things begin to come to pass look up and lift up your heads, for your salvation is at hand." In characteristically bold words St. Paul would banish for ever all vain fears from the Just, "Who is he," he cries, "that shall accuse against the elect of God? God (is He)—that justifieth. Who is he that shall condemn? Christ Jesus—(is

He)—that died: yea, that rose again; Who also maketh intercession for us.” Is it possible, he seems to ask, that you should believe that such a God and such a Saviour would condemn you if you are trying to serve Him?

I have spoken thus because if I go on now to speak of the sentence of condemnation, I want you never to forget, even in thinking of His severity, “That the Lord is compassionate and merciful, long suffering and plenteous in mercy.” Who if we turn to Him now “will not deal with us according to our sins, nor reward us according to our iniquities: But according to the height of the Heaven above the earth He will strengthen His mercy toward them that fear Him” (Ps. 102, 8-11).

Let us be firmly persuaded of God’s mercy first and then we can go on to think of His severity towards those who die in sin with greater profit to our souls and without danger of terrifying ourselves with foolish and inane fears.

We are now in His presence who will one day judge us: Who will pass that sentence which will decide our fate for Eternity. His words are loving words of invitation now—will His last word be that awful word “Depart?” It is a blessed and holy thing to feel His nearness now, to realize that His hand is upon us—will it ever be “a fearful thing to find ourselves in the hands of the Living God?” My children, the sentence of condemnation is a *possibility*—God does not want to utter it—He would rather suffer His bitter passion and death over again than pronounce it against you:—but pronounce it He will—nay, according to the purposes of His divine Providence pronounce it He must—if it is the sentence that our sins have written against us. “He will do His strange work,” says Isaiah. “His work is strange to Him.” Let us then face this possibility.

Let us imagine we hear Our Lord pronounce His dread sentence on some unhappy soul. "Depart from Me, you cursed, into everlasting fire." Depart—already has hell begun for that sinner—that word, "Depart," has sealed his eternal fate—did no other word follow. "To be with Jesus is a sweet Paradise. To be without Jesus is a grievous hell. Saints have felt that even in this life. We shall all feel it at the end. The soul's essential craving for happiness cannot be satiated but in God. Sinners strive to satisfy that craving with the things of earth. But in vain. "The famine" comes at last "when they have spent their substance living riotously." The craving is still unsated. Nay, though they lower themselves to the beasts and try to fill themselves with the things that swine do eat—they are hungry still. Sooner or later the soul will find this out. "I will arise and I will go to my Father"—if the sinner would but give it its desires. "Thou hast made my heart for thyself," cried one who, like Solomon, had drunk deep of life's delusive pleasures and found in them nothing but vanity. "Thou hast made my heart for Thyself and it can never rest till it rest in Thee" (S. Aug.). No God would have failed in His creation—that is, God would have ceased to be God—if your heart which He has made for Himself could find lasting rest and happiness in anything less than Himself. Alas, we can blind ourselves to this now: but when we see our God we can blind ourselves no longer. Then shall we realize with a conviction that is part of our very being that God is the one sole object of our soul's desire: He is its Happiness, its Destiny, its Hope, its All. Him our soul must have or perish miserably. And with every fibre of its being, it will long to possess Him.

"I go before my Judge," cries the soul of Gerontius—
And the Angel—"Praise to His name";

The eager spirit has darted from my hold
And with intemperate energy of love,
Flies to the dear feet of Emmanuel,
But ere it reach them, the keen sanctity,
Which with its effluence like a glory clothes
And circles round the Crucified has seized,
And scorched and shrivelled it—and now it lies—
Passive and still before the awful throne.
O Happy, suffering soul, for it is safe—
Consumed, yet quickened by the glance of God.

"For it is safe"—oh, my children, what of a soul that is not "safe"—what of a soul that is lost? What if it lies there not quickened by the glance, but blasted by the curse of God? In the days of His flesh Jesus once sought fruit of a tree and there was none: and turning He cursed that tree and at His word it withered to the roots. What will it be for the immortal soul to be branded by the curse of this same God, its Maker, for all eternity. "Depart from Me, you cursed—into everlasting fire."

Everlasting fire—Hell is a reality—and we must think of it not merely as a doctrine that we hold on the express teaching of Christ Himself, but as an actual fact—nay, even again, as a dread possibility. Let us recall our Lord's teaching:

He tells us of a rich man who was clothed in purple and fine linen and feasted sumptuously every day. And with this man he contrasts the beggar Lazarus, who sat at the rich man's gate begging. "It came to pass," says Christ, "that the beggar died and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom. And the rich man also died and *he was buried in hell*. And, lifting up his eyes, when he was in torments, he saw Abraham afar off and Lazarus in his bosom: and

he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water to cool my tongue, for *I am tormented in this flame.*" And Abraham said to him: "Son, remember that thou didst receive good things in thy life-time and likewise Lazarus evil things, but now he is comforted and thou art tormented. And, besides all this, between us and you there is *fixed a great chaos*, so that they who would pass from hence to you cannot, nor from thence come hither." And he said: "Then, Father, I beseech thee that thou wouldst send him to my father's house, for I have five brethren that he may testify to them *lest they also come into this place of torments.*" And Abraham said to him, "They have Moses and the prophets, let them hear them—if they hear not Moses and the prophets *neither will they believe if one rise again from the dead*" (Luke xvi, 19).

Here, then, we have Our Lord's teaching clear and defined on this dread doctrine of hell. Let us consider it together.

He tells us first that the soul is "*buried in hell*"—the living soul. The mind refuses to think of the horrors that afflict the unfortunate being who is buried alive—the imagination shrinks, cowering from the ghastly spectacle. Yet Jesus, the God of Truth, uses that word to picture the disaster to the lost soul. *It is buried alive.* Flames that give no light—for hell is "the eternal darkness"—will bind the soul, as in serpent coils, in the pit of hell, more strait, more narrow, more confined than the grave could ever be to the living man. And it is the immortal soul itself. Death or madness must soon end the conscious suffering of the living amongst the dead. But in hell the spirit endowed with the vigor and vitality of a life that can never end—to which freedom seems an essential attribute, must struggle helplessly and hopelessly against its strait confine-

ment for as long as God shall be God. And after millions of ages the shrieking horror of the shock with which it first realized its hopeless imprisonment will be as keen, as intense, as penetrating as then.

And, cries the wretched man, "*I am tormented in this flame.*" For not only does the fire bind and hold its victim, but afflicts and torments it too. "They shall be salted with fire," says Holy Scripture. "For as salt penetrates and permeates into every part of the meat, this tormenting flame will pierce the soul through and through with exquisite torture. Oh, who can dwell," cries the prophet, "with devouring flames? On sins and on the stains of sins will these devouring flames prey for ever. In those things in which a man has offended in those shall he be most grievously tormented." He who denied his palate no indulgence, who "feasted sumptuously every day," shall thirst for a drop of water for all eternity. Remember this when you are tempted "to serve injustice" with the senses or powers that God has given you; that these same powers, stained by sin, may serve as prey for the devouring flames for all eternity. "Mine eye hath wasted my soul" (Lamentations iii, 51).

Abraham tells the lost soul it is impossible to come to his help, for he says, "Between us and you there is a great chaos fixed." Now, what is this chaos? Chaos means confusion—and the confusion is in the sinner's own heart. "Thy destruction shall be in the midst of thee." The longing love for its Maker is, as we have seen, essential to the soul, and once the soul has seen the "King in his beauty," that longing becomes an absorbing passion. But the will of the sinner, perverted by a life of defiance and hatred of God, is fixed unchangeably in its utter rejection of Him. Without a miracle of God that will can never be altered. Hence "the chaos"—fixed and eternal—the soul by its divinely implanted instinct longing ceaselessly

but hopelessly for its God—and the perverted will turned in unquenchable hate and undying rebellion against Him.

It is the restless panting of their being
Like beasts of prey who caged within their bars,
In a deep, hideous purring have their life
And an incessant pacing to and fro.

Let this thought teach us, my dear children, the danger of repeated sin—we are strengthening our will thereby against God—and every deliberate evil choice intensifies that perversity. And should we die with our will thus perverted and defiant—perverted and defiant must it remain for all Eternity. People ask why God punishes sin for ever—the answer is that sinner defies Him for ever. Were God to allow the sinner to enter heaven that sinner would yet be turned in hatred against Him and Heaven would be hell for him. It is not God—but the sinner's hatred of God—that makes hell eternal. "Your iniquities have divided between you and your God" (Is. lix, 2).

In the rich man's next request—that his brothers should be warned "lest they also come to this place of torments," Our Lord would remind us of the torture of remorse. These brothers were, presumably, what he himself had been—men leading careless lives, utterly forgetful of the soul and its needs—clothed in purple and fine linen and feasting sumptuously every day—every whim catered to; every desire gratified—what state could be happier than theirs, what life more enjoyable? And yet this unfortunate brother, who had tasted it all and knew well by experience all the pleasure it could possibly afford, is earnest to have them warned even by a miracle—"lest they also come to this place of torment." Alas, poor wretch, how bitterly he bewails his own folly now. "What doth it profit a man if he gain

the whole world and suffer the loss of his soul?" Remorse is a torment we can but faintly realize in this world. "Hope springs eternal in the human breast": and we know there are few evils that are really without remedy. Even the suicide is buoyed in his rash act by the hope of something better. But in hell the despair is absolute. "Abandon hope all ye who enter here."

Perhaps because it is so alien to our natural temperament and therefore so hard for us to realize, that our Lord with such insistence calls attention to this torment. Time and again He speaks of hell as the place "where the worm dieth not and the fire is not extinguished"—thus seeming to point to the remorse of conscience first as a greater torment than even the fire of hell itself. This remorse is indeed part of ourselves; it is innate in our conscience—but how little control even here have we over its reproaches. In hell it will completely dominate the sinner: and hiss out its unending revilings for all eternity. "Fool, fool, it will cry: what are you doing here—you, a Child of God, with devils in hell? You whom God made for Himself, for whom a throne in heaven, bought by the Blood of Christ, was made ready and waiting—who could have been saved for the asking. Fool, you have lost Heaven—you have lost Jesus, you have lost Mary, you have lost your guardian angel, you lost your patron saints, you have lost all whom you really loved: your parents, your sisters, your brothers,—all who have gone before you in the Faith, and who were longing and waiting for you in heaven—all these you have lost and have gained in their stead the torments of hell, the society of hateful demons—for what? for what? You fool, for what? For less than the apple of paradise! less than the mess of pottage! for less than the thirty pieces of silver!—Ah, for the cruel gratification of that contemptible spite! that pride—that sneaking jealousy, that degrading sensuality—for

those things of which you are now ashamed—oh, fool, you have made your choice and for all eternity you must abide by it! “Saying within themselves, repenting and groaning for anguish of spirit: we fools; we wearied ourselves in the way of iniquity and destruction. What hath pride profited us, or the boasting of riches—all those things are passed away like a shadow—but we are consumed in our wickedness. Such things as these the sinners said in hell” (Wisd. v, 3-14).

Abraham’s answer to the lost soul pleading that his brothers might be warned, is well worthy of our consideration. “If they believe not Moses and the prophets, neither will they believe if one should rise again from the dead.” For we have a Greater than Moses and the Prophets—One, too, who has risen from the dead, Jesus Himself, to teach us, and yet, have all Catholics a faith in this doctrine that really influences their lives? Is there not reason to fear that the mawkish sentimentality that passes for Religion nowadays is driving out that healthy fear of hell which is essential to the Catholic spirit? “I am afraid,” said a lady to me once, “I can not accept your theory of hell. I prefer to follow Canon Farrar who holds that the punishment is not eternal. And really, Father, is it not much nicer to go to heaven by the way of love?” Now that lady called herself a Catholic and went frequently to the Sacraments. With her you see hell was a matter of theory. If the poor thing meant what she said—and sometimes people seem to have reached to such an intensity of affectation as really to have become incapable of doing so—but if she did, then surely she had lost her faith, and the idea that she was going to heaven by the way of love was simply a deceit of the devil. Be quite sure, my dear children, we must work out our salvation with fear and trembling, or never work it out at all. I know St. John says:

“Perfect love driveth out fear.” Yes, but let us make sure it is *perfect love* and not sheer impudence. The saints in heaven have no fear; but no saint on earth was ever without the fear of God. What saints have ever surpassed St. Alphonsus, St. Teresa, St. Philip Neri, in their love of God, and yet read their lives and you will ever find them full of the fear of losing God. St. Alphonsus and St. Teresa tell us distinctly they owe their conversion to God simply and directly to the fear of hell.

Let us at least then resolve, my dear children, not to be caught by the “Pleasant Sunday Afternoon” spirit of these times. Let hell be the dread reality for us that it was for the saints. Don’t think it will sour you. St. Alphonsus was not sour, St. Teresa was full of an engaging kindness, and St. Philip was the sweetest saint that ever lived, yet they feared hell. Even our dear Lady tells us we must live in fear if we wish for mercy. “His mercy is from generation unto generation to them that fear Him.” And, finally, what could be more convincing than the words of Christ Himself: “And I say to you, my friends: Be not afraid of them who kill the body and after that have no more that they can do. But I will shew you whom ye shall fear: fear ye Him who after He hath killed hath power to cast into hell. Yea, I say to you, fear Him” (Luke xii, 4-5).

God though He is, could He speak plainer? After that I say, what is the use of telling us we insult God by fearing. Here we have Christ’s own words *to His friends*, mind you!—“Fear Him.” Yes, let love, if God should so permit, grow so perfect in our hearts as to drive out fear, even before we reach the security of our last-*ing* Home; but do not let us be so rash as to anticipate this work of love by driving out fear ourselves. We can with more security leave the end of our course in the hands of God, if meanwhile we

have done our best to look after the beginning. And remember: "The fear of the Lord is *the beginning* of wisdom" (Ps. cx, 10). At any rate, then let us *begin* in fear—in definite, true fear of this dread sentence of condemnation: "Pierce my bones with Thy fear, for I am afraid of Thy Judgments." It is in this way alone we can secure for ourselves the means and reward of perseverance: "Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord. He shall delight exceedingly in his commandments. Glory and wealth shall be in his house and his justice remaineth for ever and ever" (Ps. cxi, 1-3).

V. CONFESSION

"Let us go with confidence to the Throne of Grace that we may obtain mercy."—Heb. iv, 16.

SYNOPSIS.—(1) *Because Jesus so lovingly invites us we should approach to the Sacrament of Penance with confidence.*

(2) *That confidence should be based, not on feeling or sentiment, but:*

(a) ON FAITH. (1) *Jesus proves His power as Man to forgive sin.*

(2) *Jesus gives that same power to His Apostles and their successors.*

(b) ON HOPE. (1) *Which guards us against the PRESUMPTION of those who make hurried and careless confession.*

(2) *And against the despair of those who make sacrilegious confession.*

(c) CHARITY. *We should love the Sacred Heart too much to allow it to agonize over the Precious Blood being shed in vain.*

We have thought of the Tribunal of Justice and the sentence of Condemnation: now we are to think of the Throne of Grace and the sentence of Mercy. For the sincere repentance of those sins which at the revelation of the just Judgment of God would have brought down upon us His eternal curse will, before the Throne of His Mercy in the Confessional, obtain for us His pardon and forgiveness. We must be sure of this, if we are to go with confidence to that throne. We must be quite sure that God loves us *individually*. "He loved *me*," we must say with St. Paul, "and delivered Himself for *me*." We are here in His Presence and that Sacred Heart is there in the Host beating with love for us, and His voice bids us come to Him. He does not wish to condemn us. "How will He condemn thee repenting who died that thou mightest not be condemned?" asked St. Thomas of Villanova; "how will He reject thee returning who came from heaven to seek thee flying

from Him?" "Come to Me," is His invitation, "I will refresh you." And He challenges us to prove Him false to His word. "Come and accuse Me—if your sins be as scarlet, they shall be made white as snow." What is there that God could have said or done more to make it clear even to the most wicked or the most timorous that He does not will the death of the sinner but that the sinner turn from his way and live. Remembering then God's love for us, His desire to save us, His loving invitation to repentance, "let us go with confidence to the throne of grace," resolving to get rid of our sins by a sincere and humble confession. That, believe me, is the great work of the retreat. It is the work the devil hates most, and the work he sets himself with greatest hatred and cunning to destroy. Be warned against him, and let me suggest to you that if your confidence is to withstand his insidious wiles it must be a strong confidence that has its foundation fixed deep in the supernatural virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity.

What do I mean by a Confidence based on Faith? You say every day, "I believe in the forgiveness of sins," and by it you mean that when you have made a good confession you believe your sins are forgiven. At least that is what you should mean, and I hope what you do mean. But do you think all Catholics mean this? I wish I could be sure of it. I speak with the strongest conviction when I say that if all Catholics did, half the troubles and worries about confession would be done away with. It is quite seriously true that there are many excellent Catholics—Catholics willing to die for their Faith—who on this one matter are pure and simple Protestants. They don't *believe*—they *judge*, and they judge on the feeblest and most unreliable of all criteria—their *feelings*. It is nothing but Protestantism, and a weak and mawkish Protestantism at that. They believe their sins are forgiven when they *feel*

they are forgiven, and not till then. Their own priests may reassure them, priests they go to in other parishes may reassure them, missionaries may try their hand—nay, I believe if an angel from heaven were to try to reassure them, they would still want to confess to another angel because as they would almost certainly say they did not feel quite satisfied. Let us make up our minds quite decidedly that we believe our sins are forgiven not because we *feel* they are, but because having fulfilled the conditions our Faith lays down for us, God through His appointed minister assures us that they are. It is not a spiritually healthy attitude to adopt to imagine we have put everything quite right ourselves and have taken good care to leave absolutely nothing to the mercy of God. Cocksurenness, so to speak, or the Jack Horner "Oh, what a good boy I am" sentiment, finds no echo in the lives of God's saints. Very often God leaves his best friends in darkness,, just in order that they should not feel satisfied. "When you shall have done all things that are commanded, you say 'we are unprofitable servants'" (Luke xvii, 10). We may, of course, desire warmth and devotion when we go to our Confession; we may pray for it, and thank God should He vouchsafe to us that inward peace and contentment, which often comes with a sincere confession as an assurance of forgiveness. But we must not *rely* on it: we must not make it the test of the forgiveness of our sins. And the reason is obvious. If we do, our confidence becomes the plaything of our feelings, so that unless our fervor guarantees for us beforehand our forgiveness, it becomes impossible to carry out the Apostle's injunction and "approach with confidence to the throne of grace."

Not feelings, then, but *Faith* is to be the sure foundation of our confidence—Faith in our Lord's word. Let us be quite clear about it. Do you remember when, after His kind word to the palsied cripple,

"Be of good heart, son, thy sins are forgiven thee," the wretched Scribes and Pharisees murmured amongst themselves, "He blasphemeth; no one can forgive sins but God alone," what our Lord's answer to them was? It is worth remembering, for such murmurers are living to-day here in our midst, and all round us we can still hear them sneering, "No one can forgive sins but God alone." Well, what did our Lord say? These are his words: "That you might know the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, young man, I say to thee, arise!" That was His answer. He worked an astounding miracle to prove that what He had said was true—that that young man's sins were forgiven him. But notice carefully His words. It would have been quite to our Lord's purpose and a quite obvious retort to his opponents' malice, out of their mouth to have shown that since He had proved He had forgiven that man's sins and no one forgives sin but God—that therefore He was God. He might have done that, but He does not. And the fact gives an added significance to the words He actually does use. "That you might know," He says, "that the Son of man" (He does not say the Son of God) "hath power on *earth*" (not in heaven) "to forgive sins." He is answering an objection clearly put, viz.: that God alone had power to forgive sins. And His answer supported by a miracle is: that He as *man* had power on earth to forgive sins. It is no fair retort to say that Jesus, being God as well as man, forgave sins as God, for He works the miracle to show that He forgave sin emphatically *not* as God but as *Man*. No, He proves to their teeth that He as *Man* has power to forgive. But now granting that the miracle proves no more than what the Jews were ready to admit without any miracle, viz.: that God has power to forgive sins. At any rate it must be admitted that Jesus, the God-made Man, had power to forgive sins on earth. Very well. Come now

to another scene. In the 20th chapter of his Gospel St. John describes an event that took place in the Supper room on the night of the first Easter Sunday. Our risen Lord appeared suddenly amongst His disciples and greeted them with the words: "Peace be to you." Then He said to them: "As the Father hath sent Me, I also send you." When He had said this He breathed on them, and He said to them: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost; whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them." Understand well what this means. He gives to His disciples the same power that His Father had given Him. "As the Father hath sent Me I also send you." He had proved, as we have seen, that amongst other things He had the power of forgiving sins. That same power He now gives to His Apostles; and, as if to prevent all misconception about it, as if to meet the objection with which he Himself had been assailed and which as a fact of history has ever been urged against the claimants of this power, He clearly and emphatically defines the gift he grants them, nay, confers it with a solemn and sacramental ceremonial. "He breathes on them," St. John says, and then adds these sacred words: "Receive ye the Holy Ghost. Whose sins you shall forgive, they are forgiven them." Words surely have lost their meaning if Christ did not intend to give power to men on earth to forgive sins. God though He is, what more could He have said or done to impress this truth on the minds of men. If there be those who read their Bible with an open mind, and still doubt it, all we can say is that the fault is all their own.

Well, at any rate we as Catholics believe and we profess our belief whenever we say: "I believe in the forgiveness of sins," that God has given power to men on earth (to the Apostles and their rightly ordained successors to the end of time) to forgive the sins of those who with due dispositions seek pardon for them. But

now is your belief a *practical* one? Does it help you in Confession? This is what I mean when I say that our confidence should be based on our faith—that is a sure foundation. To believe that when the priest pronounces over us the words of Absolution, our sins are forgiven. That in the name and with the power of Christ he can say to us, “I absolve thee from thy sins in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Ghost,” in that firm faith and not in any passing or deceptive emotion should we approach with confidence to the throne of grace that we may find mercy.

Supernatural hope helps our confidence by enabling us to overcome its two most deadly enemies—Presumption and Despair. Our sins will most certainly be forgiven if we do what God requires of us. Now God requires that we should tell our sins—that we should be sorry for them and willing to do penance for them. These three conditions: Confession, Contrition and Satisfaction, by which I here mean “the willingness” to do the penance the priest may give us, are essentially necessary for the valid reception of the Sacrament. It is as impossible to have the Sacrament of Penance without them as to bestow Baptism without water. Now altogether apart from what are known as *bad* confessions, it is possible that, without any sacrilegious malice, carelessness about these essential conditions may entirely rob our confession of its Sacramental efficacy. So you see it becomes a serious matter. The source of the danger lies in this: that besides its sacred and supernatural aspect the Sacrament of Penance has a very human side as well. You know the priest. You are in his district. He calls at your house. You collect—may be—for his altar society. Or you help in the sacristy. In a hundred ways you are brought into constant friendly and familiar intercourse with him. For this reason you prefer to go to some other priest to confession. Or for this very reason, as it may

be, you prefer to go to him. Well, whichever way you decide, your choice you see is influenced largely by human and natural considerations. I am not blaming you, of course. I am only noticing a fact that is so ordinary and every-day a matter that one can hardly see how it is to be avoided; but I notice it to show you how the human element necessarily enters into the Sacrament of Penance. But quite obviously the human element is for all of us a distinct danger. We get used to the Sacrament. The time we go, the priest we go to, the people perhaps we meet with when we go, nay, the very sins we confess—all serve to impress us with the weekly or fortnightly routine of it all, and proportionately to rob it of its sacred character. Let us during our retreat take ourselves seriously to task about the way we make our confession. Many a one, believe me, can date his or her true conversion to God from the resolution they made during retreat to be more careful and serious in their regular Confessions.

“Before prayer,” says the preacher, “prepare thy soul and be not as one that tempteth God.” If carelessness in our ordinary prayer is thus shown to be an offence against God, how much more serious a matter must carelessness be with regard to the Sacraments. In Confession we draw near in very truth to the feet of Jesus. Our souls are to be cleansed with the Precious Blood—we set in motion a spiritual force and energy of greater power, says St. Augustine, than was needed for the creation of the world. How careful and devout, then, should be our preparation. We simply can not hope to derive any full or lasting benefit from Confession unless we sincerely resolve to make a serious and prayerful preparation whenever we approach this Sacrament of Penance. No better resolution can be suggested to you than to follow the advice we all learned as children from our Catechism. We must do four things

in order to make a good Confession: First, we must heartily pray for grace to make a good Confession; secondly, we must carefully examine our conscience; thirdly, we must take time and care to make a good act of contrition; and fourthly, we must resolve to renounce our sins and to begin a new life for the future. Thus we shall, whilst avoiding all exaggerated anxiety and scrupulosity, secure that our Confessions be free from any carelessness that routine or the necessary human element inherent in the Sacrament might otherwise cause, and that we shall not join in the presumption of tempting God, of which they are guilty who approach this august Sacrament without first preparing their soul.

Hope, then, guards our confidence from presumption by reminding us that if we are to have our sins forgiven it can only be by our fulfilling certain necessary conditions. But it does something of more positive and deeper helpfulness than that it comes to banish all misgiving and despair. The devil, St. Antonius tells us, was once caught at the Confessional door by a holy servant of God and forced by him to declare his business. "I am here," he said, and we may imagine how reluctantly, "to make *restitution*. When I tempt a soul to sin I take away two things: I take away shame and I take away fear, and I come here to give back those two things. I give back shame and I give back fear, so that what the sinner was not ashamed or afraid to commit, that sinner, when he comes here, may be ashamed or afraid to confess." Here certainly is the cunning of the evil spirit disclosed to us. For once the unfortunate sinner has admitted shame or fear to a full entrance into his heart, he will soon find to his dismay that they have come but as fore-runners of that strong and awful spirit, "the dumb devil," whose work it is to make confession impossible and so drive the poor sinner to despair. Let us fear this devil and let us fear his fore-

runners. Remember once a sin has been committed, the only way of getting rid of it is by sincere Confession. No matter what else is done, until that sin has been confessed it still awaits its revelation here or hereafter. A certain lady there was, as again St. Antonius tells us, whose holiness of life, great austerities, abundant alms and frequent reception of the Sacraments had won for her such reputation for sanctity that when she came to die the people at once honored her as a saint. But, alas, for the value of human judgment, the poor creature had fallen a victim to this dumb devil in the Confessional and had lost her soul. "Pray not *to* me," she said to one who was actually invoking her intercession, "and pray not *for* me—I am lost and in hell because I never had the courage to tell in Confession the sins of my wicked youth, and whilst I concealed those sins all other works were unavailing to win for me the pardon of God." Oh, then let us banish shame and fear from our hearts when we are making ready for Confession. Once we have sinned there is before God no nobler or more pleasing act than the humble acknowledgment of our sin; and if that is so, why should we pause to think what man, even the best of them, might think about us. But, as a fact, what does our confessor think, what can he think, save just this one thing: is this poor child sorry? "Had we to confess to angels," says St. Chrysostom, "we might indeed fear that when they heard our sins, zeal to revenge the majesty of their offended Lord would urge them to rise in their wrath and smite us to our destruction." But God has purposely left the ministry of this Sacrament not to angels but to men—to human beings like ourselves, who know what it is to be tempted, how hard it is to resist, men who would belie every true instinct in their nature were they to show themselves harsh or ungentle to their fallen brethren, and every duty of the priestly office, were they to

act otherwise than in complete accord with the heart of the loving Saviour Who had compassion on the multitude.

It is in this Loving Heart we place our hope. We confess to men, it is true, but if we are wise, we shall as far as may be, forget their persons in their office. We shall remember them only as the representatives of the God we have offended, but whose voice it is we have heard calling us to repentance. Man must be forgotten now. "Against Thee only have I sinned and done evil in Thy sight, and to Thee acknowledge it. Behold, we come to Thee, for Thou art our God." And we begin our Confession by reminding ourselves of it all—"I confess to almighty God."

Hope then, by showing us clearly we are dealing with a merciful God, will, whilst it makes us reverent and free from presumption, secure for us the victory over fearfulness or despair.

A confidence founded on Faith and safeguarded by supernatural Hope might not help us, were it not motivated by Charity, this it is that brings it to perfection. Love, true and sincere, for the agonizing Heart of Jesus is the best source of all deep and lasting sorrow for sin. Look at Jesus praying in the Garden before He suffered. His heart is in the wine-press of bitterest grief. The words are being fulfilled: "I have trodden the wine-press alone," the miracle of Cana is being renewed, the water is changed into wine, the deep red wine of His precious Blood. "His sweat became as drops of blood trickling down upon the ground" (Luke xxii, 44). Now, why was this awful agony? How did that Blood flow before a blow had been struck or a wound had been inflicted? No single answer can of course be adequate, but let me suggest one to you in connection with my subject that may help us to a nearer sympathy with Jesus and make us resolve to get rid of sins by a good Confession. I say, then, that Jesus agonized not so much in

fear of the sufferings and death that were then awaiting Him. No, His love was brave to suffer for His friends. "I am the Good Shepherd," He had said, "and I lay down My life for My sheep. No man taketh it away from Me, but I lay it down of My self" (John x, 1). And again: "Having joy set before Him, He endured the Cross, despising the shame" (Heb. xii, 2). No, it was not the pain nor the shame—these He could have borne. But a more terrible vision assailed His imagination. Hitherto He had been sustained by the thought of the victory of His Cross. "When I shall be lifted up," He had said, "I shall draw all things unto Me" (John xii, 32), this He said signifying what death He should die. Now, He allowed His soul to drink in the bitterness of defeat. "What profit is there in My Blood?" (Ps. xxix, 10). He saw how, though that Blood was waiting for them, to cleanse them from their sins in the Sacrament of Penance, men would let it lie unheeded there and despise it; nay, that they would profane and desecrate it by bad Confessions. "His Blood be upon us," rang in His ears as He lay there prostrate in dreadful agony and He heard that cry echoing through the ages. He saw that men and women—Catholics who *did* know what they were doing—would ask that that precious Blood should be poured upon their *unrepentant* hearts and that It would lie upon those hearts as It lay upon the hard rock on Calvary, crying not for pardon but for vengeance upon them. Ah, poor Jesus, for Him to see that the Blood He was to shed with such infinite love and at the cost of such fearful torment should by man's sinful perversity become, not their salvation, but the means of their damnation. "His Blood be upon us and upon our children."

As you love your own soul, and above all as you love the Sacred Heart of Jesus, do promise your Lord to-night that, come what

may, no devil in hell will ever have power to induce you by shame or fear or any other means whatever to make a bad Confession.

No! "let us go with confidence to the throne of grace," being quite sure if that confidence is strengthened, guarded and prompted by the great virtues of Faith, Hope and Charity, we shall infallibly find Mercy waiting for us in the Sacred Heart of Jesus.

VI. THE SPIRIT OF CHRIST: OBEDIENCE.

"Come to Me all you that labor and are burdened and I will refresh you. Take up My yoke upon you and learn of Me, because I am meek and humble of heart and you shall find rest to your souls. For My yoke is sweet and My burden light."—Matt. xi, 28, 30.

SYNOPSIS.—*The object of the Retreat is: (1) To get rid of sin; (2) To become Children of God.*

We get rid of sin by a good Confession. We become Children of God by acquiring the Spirit of Jesus. The virtues of that spirit are typified in the Vision of the Sacred Heart—by the Cross—the Thorns—the Wound which represent: Obedience. Restraint. Love.

By these virtues Jesus overcomes the world: i. e., the concupiscence of the eyes, the concupiscence of the flesh, the pride of life and selfishness engendered by these concupiscences.

First He conquers the "Pride of Life" by accepting the cross of His Father's Will in loving obedience as shown: (1) In the Birth. (2) In the Hidden Life. (3) In the Public Life. (4) In the Passion and Death.

We imitate Him: (1) By praying. (2) Doing our daily work. (3) Bearing our daily crosses: as Children of God and in Obedience to Our Father in Heaven.

When Jesus said, "You cannot serve God and Mammon," He was not merely telling us a truth, He was giving us a warning, for many there are who try to do this thing. They profess they are serving God whilst almost without adverting to it they are paying court to the world. "These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me." Now during a Retreat we can look carefully into this matter, we can see where we stand, or whither we are drifting, we can discover for ourselves whether we are serving God "*with a perfect heart,*" as Scripture speaks, or only paying outward and, so to speak, conventional service to Him. For the best of us this close scrutiny can hardly be flattering, but we are not to be

discouraged. It is God's will that we should make it, and we should be sure from that that He wants to help us to profit by it. When we have convinced ourselves of our worldliness and the sins with which it has burdened us, He bids us come to Him and seek His pardon, as we have seen, in a good Confession, "Come to Me you that labor and are burdened and I will refresh you." But that is not all. We can get rid of sins at once, but not at once, save by a miracle, of worldliness—the source of so many sins. One earnest desire, one good Confession, one week's fervent Retreat will most assuredly help us, but we cannot hope that it will destroy worldliness in our heart forever. Worldliness may be wounded; it may lie dormant for a while, but it is living still, perhaps only awaiting an opportunity to rise to its accustomed triumph in our hearts. It is a dread and powerful enemy, and only the strength of God can give us the victory over it. But Jesus longs to give us that strength. "Have confidence" He says to encourage us. "I have overcome the world." "Take my yoke upon you and learn of Me because I am meek and humble of heart and you shall find rest to your souls."

From His meek and humble heart then we are to learn the virtues and to draw the spirit that will conquer the world. Make that spirit your own, and worldliness will fly from you. For the spirit of the world is the inheritance of our fallen nature, the concupiscence of the eyes, the concupiscence of the flesh, and the pride of life, and the cold, hard-hearted self-centredness and self-sufficiency which results from indulgence in these concupiscences. Look now at the meek and humble Heart of Jesus as He has revealed it to us and at once you will see how its Spirit is able to conquer the world. For in that Heart thus revealed we see symbolized for us the virtues that constitute the Spirit of Jesus. It is surmounted by a Cross and there are flames of love embracing that Cross. It is encircled

with thorns. It is pierced by a lance. These things I say symbolize for us the Spirit of Jesus. For what do they tell us? The Cross is the Will of His heavenly Father, and the flames of His love are loyally embracing it. That is the Obedience which is to conquer the pride of life. The thorns that encircle the Heart and wound it (for the points of thorns are stained with blood) show the restraint that Jesus practised "leaving us an example" that we must follow if we are to fight successfully against the "concupiscence of the eyes and the concupiscence of the flesh." And the wound on the Heart has a lesson of special significance. The Heart is wounded but loving still, nay it loves the very hand that pierced it, "whilst yet we were sinners Christ died for us." It teaches us we must forgive or we shall not be forgiven, and we must keep His commandment of love or we shall not be reckoned amongst His disciples. "A new commandment I give unto you that you love one another as I have loved you"; and "By this shall all men know that you are My disciples if you have love one for another" (John xiii, 34, 35). That is the love that makes us all brethren of Jesus and Children of God and drives from our hearts the cold and arrogant selfishness of worldlings.

This, then, is the Spirit of Jesus. The spirit of Obedience, of Restraint and of Brotherly Love. This spirit we must strive without ceasing to make our own. For just in proportion to our doing so depends our power to conquer the world, and to fit ourselves for Heaven. "For whom He foreknew He also predestinated to be made conformable to the image of His Son" (Rom. viii, 29). Nothing then could be more necessary or useful for us than to study well the Spirit of Jesus. Let us begin then with His *Obedience*. That we have considered as typified for us by the flames of love that rise from His Heart to embrace the Cross of His Father's will.

It would be impossible in a conference like this to cite all the Scripture passages that speak of the Obedience of Christ, neither of course is it necessary. But some I must quote to show you how this great virtue is an essential characteristic of the spirit of Jesus. And my first text shall be the great verse in the Hebrews x, 5, etc.: "When He cometh into the world He saith, sacrifice and oblation thou wouldest not, but a body thou hast fitted to Me. Holocausts for sin did not please Thee. Then said I, behold I come. In the head of the book it is written of Me *that I should do Thy Will, O God.* In which will we are sanctified by the oblation of the body of Jesus Christ." He is born then in obedience to His Father's will, as the angels sang to give "Glory to God in the Highest and on earth Peace to men of good will." For thirty years He is hidden in the workshop of Nazareth, and all we are told of Him is, "He went down to Nazareth and was subject to them." Once indeed is the veil lifted to show us Jesus acting in a way that causes trouble to His mother. He is lost in the Temple, but His explanation, "Did you not know that I must be about My Father's business?" reveals to us that as then, when He caused them sorrow, so also during the whole of that hidden life of perfect obedience He was always about His Father's business and doing His Father's will. Leaving His home He begins his public life, but it is by the will and sanction of that Heavenly Father that He does so. The Heavens are opened at His Baptism and the Voice proclaims, "This is *My beloved Son* in Whom I am well pleased, hear ye Him."

And as He begins so does He continue. "I came," He says, "not to do My own will, but the will of Him that sent me." And again, "The things that are pleasing to Him I do always." And yet again, "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me." Proving how sincerely He practised what He proclaimed. "Not in bread alone doth

man live, but in every word that cometh from the mouth of God."

On the night before He died, looking back upon His life, He sums it all up in His prayer to His Father. "I have done the Work that Thou gavest me to do." Thus He closed "in wondrous order" the work of His active life. He had done all at the will of His Father. It was over, "The night cometh wherein no man can work." But the end of His active work was to be the beginning of his "passive" work. He was now to face his terrible sufferings. And how does He begin? Again, by an act of Obedience. "That the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father has given Me commandment, so do I, arise; let us go hence." So saying He arises from the table and proceeds to the scene of His agony. Then look at Him as He lies prostrate in that agony and hear the prayer which during those three long hours breaks from His bleeding Heart. "Father, not my will, but Thine be done." When His disciples would rescue Him by force He will not have their help, for such was not His Father's will. "Thinkest thou," He says to Peter, "that I cannot ask My Father and He will give me presently more than twelve legions of Angels? How then shall the Scriptures be fulfilled that so it must be done?" (Matt. xxvi, 53). To Pilate, who boasted he had power to release Him or to put Him to death, He declares, "Thou shouldst not have a power against me unless it were given thee from above" (John xix, 11). To that power—to the will of His heavenly Father—He bows in humble obedience. "The chalice which My Father hath given Me, shall I not drink it?" (John xviii, 11). And to the last drop does He drain that cup of bitterness, until He could cry, "It is consummated." And note, by a miracle of power the very parting with life is in this God-made man an act of *positive* Obedience. He does not merely, as the martyrs do, *allow* His executioners to take it. No, but by an exercise of divine

power He *yields* His soul Himself to God. "Father, into Thy hands I commend My spirit," and saying this He gave up the ghost (Luke xxiii, 46). With man death is the consummation of weakness. "It is not in man's power to stop the spirit, neither hath he power in the day of death" (Eccles. viii, 8). But with Jesus it is otherwise. His death is an act of power. It is with a loud cry, a cry of strength and vigor that He yields His soul to God. So grand and striking a manifestation of more than human might is it that the pagan soldier sees in it at once a convincing proof of our Lord's divinity. "And the centurion who stood over against him, seeing that crying out in this manner He had given up the ghost, said, "Indeed this man was the Son of God" (Mark xv, 39). Even in the very act of dying then He is simply obedient to His Father's will. "Therefore doth My Father love Me," He had said, "because I lay down My life that I may take it up again. No man taketh it away from Me, but I lay it down of Myself and I have power to lay it down and I have power to take it up again. *This commandment* have I received from My Father" (John x, 17-8).

From first to last then, in His birth as in His death, in His hidden life, His public life or His suffering life, Jesus is everywhere and always from the crib to the Cross obedient to the will of His Father. It is thus He conquers for us the Pride of life, for the essence of the malice of sin is rebellious pride. It was manifest in Heaven when "Lucifer said in his heart, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God—I will become as most High" (Is. xiv, 13, 14). And with this venom did the serpent infect our first parents, "You shall become as God, knowing good and evil." That he might exalt himself and become as God, man sinned by disobedience. And to atone for that sin the second Person of the ever adorable Trinity humbled Himself and became man and was obedient unto death, even the

death of the Cross. Jesus is the Truth, and His whole life witnesses to it—the devil is a liar and the father of lies. And the whole attitude of the sinner is a lie in the face of Heaven. It proclaims that God is not worthy of service and does not merit our love. That is the *Pride of life*. But every word and deed of Jesus preaches to us with intensest conviction. “The Lord thy God shalt thou adore and Him only shalt thou serve.” And serve with the loving service of confiding filial devotion. “For this was I born,” said Jesus to Pontius Pilate, and the occasion gives sublime emphasis to his words, “for this came I into the world that I might give testimony of the Truth.” Surely now we can see how it is impossible to serve God and Mammon. How he that is not with Jesus must of necessity be against Him. Look then at the Sacred Heart teaching its lesson to you and make your resolution. See the flames of the loyal love of Jesus ardently embracing the will of God as typified by that Cross, and then hear the great words of St. Paul, “Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal to God, but emptied Himself taking the form of a servant, being made in the likeness of men and in habit found as a man. He humbled Himself becoming obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross” (Phil. ii, 5-8).

Yes, let that mind be in you, the spirit of humble obedience in all things to the will of God. For such is the mind, the spirit of Jesus, and unless we have His spirit we are none of His. Now to bring these thoughts practically home to ourselves, let us see how this spirit of a child of God, bearing witness to the truth of the fatherhood of God, should show itself in our daily lives.

Well, first our prayers and spiritual duties should of course be full of this spirit. Our favorite prayer should be the prayer Jesus has taught us, “The Our Father.” Its great effect on our souls is

to remind us "we have not here a lasting city, but we are looking for one that is to come," where God our Father is king and rules in peace for evermore. "Beware," said our Lord to His disciples, "of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy." These Pharisees prayed, they fasted, they gave alms—the three eminent good works as our catechism tells us, but yet they pleased not God. For they had nothing of the Spirit of a child of God, and "unless you become as children you shall not enter into the Kingdom of Heaven." They did their works to be seen by men, and from men they received the praise they sought and Jesus has nothing further to give them. "They have received their reward," our Lord says, when they appeal to Him for their recompense they will be disappointed; for He says, as we have seen, He will dismiss them with the words, "Amen, Amen, I say to you I know you not." Their life was not the flagrant lie of open sin—but the hypocrisy of insincerity in the service of God. "These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me." They were trying to serve two masters—that is, to do what Jesus tells us is impossible. We need not suppose that they were *conscious* hypocrites—that they made a pretence of holiness and were fully aware it was only a pretence. No; it is quite true they deceived others; but they had begun by deceiving themselves. They were **BLIND**, our Lord says. He does not indeed excuse their blindness; but He does acknowledge it, and thereby distinguishes it from the clear-sighted, calculated deceitfulness of deliberately conscious hypocrisy. But though it is better than the worst, it was still bad enough to deprive the Pharisees of all the merit of their really good works, and dangerous enough to cause our Lord to warn His disciples against it. "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy." And what He says to them He says to all. You and I must be on our

guard against this subtle leaven that can insinuate itself into our holiest works and, by prevailing on us to seek in them the praise, or, at least, the attention of others, rob them of that good intention which alone can recommend them to the favor of God. Our Lord's advice to us is to pray, fast and give alms as far as we can manage it, in secret! "And your Father who seeth in the secret will reward you" (Matt. vi, 6). Then when we have made sure of our good intention, should occasion arise we need not fear to do our good works before others—for then it will but redound to the glory of God. So let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven (Matt. v, 16). And thus shall we with Jesus give testimony of the truth that God is a loving Father worthy of the most devoted service of loyal and filial hearts.

If then in our strictly spiritual works we are thoroughly sincere in seeking only to please God, we may be quite sure His blessing will rest upon all the actions of our *everyday life*. He will think of us when perhaps we are not thinking directly of Him. Our good intention, unless withdrawn by sin, will persevere through the day and make our work an obedience and a prayer. In her office at Prime, Holy Church each morning invokes God's blessing on the work of all her children. "May the splendor of the Lord our God shine upon us: and the 'works' of our hands do Thou direct." No matter how lowly or menial the task, the Church knows that if it be done to please God, the unseen splendor of Heaven will shine upon it. And while she prays for help to do "our various works" well, she adds special request that "*the work*" should be directed—that is, the work that perseveres through all the other works, and gives them value in the eyes of God, the work, namely, of the *good intention*. Let that persevere and we are leading lives in imitation

of Christ; sustained by His example, strengthened by His spirit; lives that proclaim that we are children of God.

In that spirit the life of the poorest and meanest of God's servants is grand and noble before the angels of Heaven. And in that spirit the *trials and contradictions and disappointments* of life become, as Father Faber would call them, "the raw material of our future glory." The eye of faith recognizes them as crosses sent by our loving Father to see if we can suffer for Him as Christ has suffered for us. So many good people have quite mistaken notions about crosses! They understand that they are signs of God's love. They are resolved in prayer time to accept them willingly; yet even though they are actually on the lookout for them, they miss them somehow when they do come. The fault is that they cannot see wood for trees. They expect something big and striking, something they imagine themselves bearing with the fortitude of a martyr—if it only would come! But it does not come; and the little annoyances and troubles that do come, they make no good of it at all. These things seem to them "*not to count*"; and they allow themselves to get irritated and bad tempered over them as though such trifles did not really matter, whereas it is just in bearing these pinpricks and every-day annoyances with cheerful resignation that we show ourselves God's children, and acquire the spirit of Jesus. "If any one will come after Me, let him deny himself, take up his cross daily and follow Me" (Luke ix, 23), and it is that word DAILY that I should like here to emphasize. St. Teresa and her little brother once on a time, we are told, went off hand in hand, when they were children, to seek out the Moors, that they might be martyred for Christ. Luckily, their uncle met them and sent them home, before they came to grief. We see plainly enough that God did not intend that the

big cross of martyrdom should be theirs; even though they generously and sincerely desired it. It would be well if we were always as wise in our own case. It is the occasional pinch of poverty, the irritation or shame arising from the sin or folly of this or that relative or friend, the weariness of sickness of some chronic invalid at home, or the troubles at work, a fault-finding, nagging master or mistress; a jealous or suspicious companion, or a lying neighbor. It is in these things that you can find the cross that Jesus wants you to bear. And it is just because it is not of your own seeking that you show yourself a child of God when "without letting all the world know about it," you receive that trial, disappointment or injustice in silent and loving resignation to His holy will:

Were it not better to lie still,
Let Him strike home and bless the rod,
Never so safe as when our will
Yield, undiscerned by all but God. [Keble.]

Not *safe merely*, but *happy*; provided we "yield" without reluctance or complaint but with cheerful acquiescence and joy—for the "Lord loveth a cheerful giver," and it is His spirit "Who rejoiced as a giant to run his way." Crosses we must have; they are the passport to Heaven—"No cross, no crown"—and they alone can be secure of happiness here below who find their happiness in bearing their cross. To such God gives "a hidden manna." "They taste and see how sweet is the Lord." And though indeed they have the cross; yet, like the Apostles, "they rejoice to be counted worthy to suffer reproach for the name of Jesus" (Acts v, 41). The world sees their cross, says St. Bernard; it does not see the sweetness that God gives to those who suffer with Him. "*Crucem vident—unctionem non vident.*"

To bear our cross daily then—to live in the presence of God—to

do our good works to please our Father Who is in heaven : this is to take upon ourselves the yoke of Christ, to grow in the likeness of Jesus, and to live as a child of God.

It is, in a word, to do what our Lord would have us do when He says to us : "Take My yoke upon you and learn of Me because I am meek and humble of heart, and you shall find rest to your souls." For My yoke is sweet and My burden light.

VII. THE SPIRIT OF JESUS: RESTRAINT OF THE CONCUPISCENCE OF THE EYES

"Blessed are the poor in spirit for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven."—
Matt. v. 3.

SYNOPSIS.—1. *The thorns typify the Restraint of Jesus which teaches us to mortify the Concupiscence of the Eyes and the Concupiscence of the Flesh.*

2. *"Concupiscence of the Eyes" explained.*

3. *Jesus teaches us to overcome it by His detachment from the goods and esteem of the world.*

(a) *In His birth.*

(b) *In His hidden life.*

(c) *In His public life.*

(d) *In His death and burial.*

Let us, as the early Christians did, practically appreciate our Lord's warning, for the extreme remedy implies the presence of an extreme evil. The GREATNESS of the evil of worldliness shown in this:

1. *That it was the principal cause of the rejection of Jesus by the Pharisees.*

2. *That Judas was won by it to betray our Lord.*

The INSIDIOUSNESS of it shown:

1. *In the failure of the rich man to follow his vocation.*

2. *In the surprise of the Apostles about our Lord's teaching with regard to riches.*

Our Lord's warning by example and precept especially needful for us—who live in a rich country which regards its prosperity as a sign of the favor of God.

The flames of love embracing the Cross that surmounts the Sacred Heart teach us, then, as we have seen, the Obedience of Jesus in accepting His Father's Will. This is the victory that overcomes the "pride of life." Now we are to consider the thorns that encircle the Heart and press it tight in their cruel grasp. They teach us the Restraint we must practise to conquer the Concupiscence of the Eyes and the Concupiscence of the Flesh. These are the natural

inclinations of our fallen nature which, says our Catechism, "if not corrected by self-denial will certainly carry us to Hell." Now how are we to practise this self-denial or Restraint? Again let us look at Jesus. He has overcome the world for us. And first we shall consider Him gaining the victory over the Concupiscence of the Eyes.

It is well for us "to keep looking at Him," as St. Teresa used to advise her nuns. He has become man in order that we might do so. It is one of the great purposes of the Incarnation. He might have taught us by the message of Prophet or Apostle the way to heaven. But He has done infinitely more for us. He has trodden the way Himself, that we might have clearer guidance and greater confidence in His compassion and desire to help us. "Have confidence I have overcome the world" (John xvi, 33). He knows what is in man. He is the "God that scrutinizes the reins and the heart" (Ps. vii, 10), and He knows how that heart of man succumbs to the "bewitching vanity." It is through our eyes the world wins its way into our souls. It does not reason or argue with us. It simply shows itself. It displays its riches, its power, its strength, its grandeur, and as we gaze the conclusion steals upon us "surely these things are enough for me"—what more can my soul have, or even desire? Here is all the happiness I seek. The Concupiscence of the Eyes is eagerly excited: "These will I give thee," whispers the prince of this world, "if falling down thou wilt adore me." Jesus, I say, has anticipated that moment of crisis for the soul. He has put Himself, as Bishop Hedley tells us, in competition with the world for the possession of the heart of man, "The Word was made Flesh and dwelt amongst us." He is not a Truth, a system, a Dogma. He is a living Reality, a human being like ourselves. And He, like the world, appeals to our

hearts through our eyes. The silent figure of Jesus, the loving Saviour, Who, though Lord of all, became for our sakes "the poor Man of Nazareth," can fill our imaginations, take possession of our hearts and strengthen our souls against all the solicitations of the world's attractions. "Have confidence I have overcome the world." Thus did the Faith of the poor handful of Christians triumph in the beginning. They "sanctified the Lord Christ in their hearts" (I Pet. iii, 15), and armed themselves with the power of His Might. The image of Jesus lived by Faith in their souls, and the joy of that possession made them despise the tainted joys of earth. "Having nothing they possessed all things." For they possessed Jesus. "Whom not having seen you love," says St. Peter to them, with wistful praise as if mindful of his own transgression, "in whom though now you see Him, not yet believing you rejoice with joy unspeakable and glorified" (I Pet. i, 8). Over such hearts the world had no power to tempt from their allegiance. So let it be with us. The same Jesus is here in the Tabernacle. Ask Him now for grace to look at Him, that His Kingdom may come and drive the kingdom of the world from your hearts.

"Jesus began to do and to teach," says the sacred text (Acts i, 1). To do first and to teach afterwards. He practised poverty before He required it of others. Think first then how severe was the Poverty he practised. He is born in a stable. And why? Because "there was no room for them in the inn." Not only is He poor: so utterly poor that none in this world could be poorer, but outcast as well. No woman but can find some human habitation, some poor corner for shelter in a friend's or neighbor's house at such a crisis as Mary's. But not so when Jesus was born. "He came unto his own and his own received Him not." And so Mary "brought forth her first-born son and wrapped him up in swaddling

clothes and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them in the inn" (Luke ii, 7). "And this shall be a sign unto you. You shall find the infant wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger" (Luke ii, 2). The sign that the Lover of Poverty was born into this world, to help men to conquer the Concupiscence of the Eyes.

He is born poor and despised: and poor and despised does He live. He is for thirty years nothing more or less than a son of a workingman. They have good times maybe when "the work is going," but now and again things are so slack that, as a pious tradition tells us, Jesus had to go to a neighbor to beg for bread. And He is the God-made Man! And creatures that He has made would sometimes rather die (as they have done), than sink themselves so low as to beg for bread. Only occasionally did it happen at Nazareth. But when He leaves His home, then during the whole three years of His public life, He lives entirely on alms. And during that time, too, He could say of Himself, "The foxes have holes and the birds have nests, but the Son of Man hath not where to lay his head" (Matt. viii, 20). He has no roof to shelter Him, and He depends on alms for His daily bread. So does He go through life. And at His death He is stripped of His very garments. For three long hours He, the despised and rejected of men, is held up crucified to the scoffs and derision of an impious rabble, and then laid at last to rest in another man's sepulchre. What more could Jesus do to show us His love for Poverty. "Poverty took His hand as He lay in the crib at Bethlehem," says St. Bernard, "and walked with Him step by step of His journey through life, and did not leave Him till it left Him stripped of all things on the Cross of Calvary." And how can we flatter ourselves that we have His Spirit if we allow the Concupiscence of the

Eyes to lure us on to desire the good of earth unduly, and to set store by the esteem, popularity or influence which riches bring to men? His life of poverty will have been lived in vain for us. And yet it was for us He lived it. "You know the grace of Jesus Christ," says St. Paul; "how being rich for your sakes He became poor that by His poverty you might be rich" (II Cor. viii, 9). The early Christians did know that grace. They understood the lesson He taught them. They knew how the devil had tempted Him, had shown Him the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, saying: "All these I will give thee, if falling down thou wilt adore me"; and how He had conquered by the words: "The Lord thy God shalt thou adore, and Him only shalt thou serve" (Matt. iv, 8-10). And that had been enough for them. They knew the grace of Jesus Christ. They saw that if they were to follow in His footsteps they, too, must understand that they were here to practise detachment from the goods of this world, that they had not here a lasting city, but they were on earth to witness, as Christ did before Pontius Pilate, to this great truth that they were the children of God and not the worshippers of Mammon.

And my dear children, is not this lesson for us, too? "He became poor for your sakes." Of Himself He could say, "The Prince of this world cometh and in Me he hath not anything." The possession of all the kingdoms of this world had no allure-ment for Him. In Him there was no concupiscence. Having no concupiscence, there was no need for the restraint of poverty. It was for your sakes that He became poor.

Now do you know the grace of Jesus Christ as the early Christians did. Have you learned His lesson? Surely we shall have much to answer for if the Son of God bore such extreme poverty for our sakes and we have not profited by it. We may not be called upon

to endure actual want as He did, but the very least we can do, is at any rate to learn that there must be some secret-hidden danger in riches, and something very pleasing to God in poverty. Reason enlightened by Faith must recognize that that evil must indeed be great which in the wisdom of God demanded so drastic a remedy for its cure as the poverty of Jesus. And do not the Gospels furnish us with the most convincing proof of the greatness of this evil? Is it not to it, more than to any other single cause that the greatest sin the world has witnessed—the crucifixion of the God-made Man—is directly due. The Jews rejected Christ, and Judas betrayed Him principally through love of money and the things of the world, *i. e.* through the Concupiscence of the Eyes. When He was born the priests could tell the Magi where to seek Him. They knew that well enough. But they would not act upon that knowledge themselves. No, their worldliness prevented them. They had no welcome for their Messiah, when to welcome Him meant to lose the friendship of their earthly King. And so it was that “Herod was troubled and *all Jerusalem with him.*” Again His poverty and obscurity were to them a stumbling-block in the way of accepting His doctrine. “Is not this the carpenter’s son” (Matt. xiii, 55). “Jesus the son of Joseph whose father and mother we know” (John vi, 42), was their one great argument against Him. And at the end it was worldliness that decided the hesitating Pilate and brought the mock trial to a speedy conclusion. “If thou release this man thou art no friend of Caesar” (John xix, 12). “Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered: *We have no king but Caesar.* Then, *therefore*, he delivered Him to them to be crucified” (John xix, 15).

Quite clearly then worldliness or the Concupiscence of the Eyes was the great cause of the rejection of Christ by the Jews, and

just as clearly was it the cause of his betrayal by Judas. No need to labor this point. The Gospel clearly tells us, and the avariciousness of Judas has passed into a proverb.

Now the obvious question for us is this: Does my fear of this evil bear any proportion to the greatness of the danger as revealed in the perfidy of the Jews or the treachery of Judas? Is it an adequate answer to the warning given me by the whole life of Jesus or by the words of the Apostle: "The desire of money is the root of all evils" (I Tim. vi, 10). It is not a fair reply to say, "Thank God I am not a Pharisee; still less am I a Judas. I have no temptation to act as they did"—for the warning is not so much against their acts as against their spirit. "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees." And that leaven, let us be quite sure of it, can creep into the holiest souls and the best dispositions. The Gospels themselves furnish us with a most striking illustration of this (Matt. 10, Mark 10, Luke 18). A man, we are told, so eager for his soul's salvation that he came running to Jesus, threw himself at our Lord's feet saying, "Good Master, what must I do to possess Eternal Life." Jesus tells him to keep the Commandments and enumerates them. "All these," says the man, "I have kept from my youth." Then Jesus looked on him and loved him. "If thou wouldst be perfect," He says, "go, sell what thou hast and give to the poor, and come, follow Me." And the young man is struck sad at this saying and goes sorrowfully away—*"for he had great possessions."*

There is no escaping the significance of this incident. The love of riches — worldliness — the leaven of the Pharisees can eat its way like a canker into the noblest hearts and ruin the most promising aspirations. Who can promise himself security when such a one fell? Here is everything one would think that could

win for that soul a spiritual victory. He had borne the yoke from his youth, he had kept all God's Commandments, he had resisted the temptations peculiar to his age and rank; and now he comes to the Saviour full of enthusiastic desire to do all that may be asked of him. He has no doubt about his Messiah, and the vocation is clear and unmistakable. A very special grace is offered him, too. Jesus *looks on him and loves him*. But that loving look, that gracious call that had brought the grace of conversion to the Apostles, who at that moment surrounded Him, were powerless, it would seem, against the spirit of worldliness in this young man's heart. There before him were men who had nobly done what he was asked to do. Jesus Himself, "though rich, had become poor for his sake," the Apostles "had left all things and had followed Him." The call of Jesus was the loving answer to his own generous challenge. His attitude in his enthusiastic running to Jesus was exactly that of the psalmist: "Judge me, O Lord, for I have walked in my innocence, and I have put my trust in the Lord and shall not be weakened. *Prove me, O Lord, and try me*—for thy mercy is before my eyes and I am well pleased with Thy truth" (Ps. 25). Could there be a better disposition? Could there be a brighter promise? But alas for the awful and complete failure. "Can you drink of the chalice which I drink of," had been practically our Lord's sweet invitation to him. And he, like a coward, had shrunk shamefacedly away. Failing when the great prize of Eternal life was actually within his grasp; held out to him by the encouraging hand of his Saviour, and the love of Jesus, the example of the Apostles and the claims of his own honor, all urging him to take it. Why did he fail? The text is clear: "Who being struck at that saying went away sorrowful, *for he had great possessions*" (Mark x, 22).

There is the reason. Not because he was proud of his possessions, not because he spent his substance living riotously, not because he was avaricious, but simply because he *had* these great possessions. Though he had led a blameless life and served God faithfully, yet without his knowing it the Concupiscence of the Eyes had wasted his soul, and robbed it of all spiritual strength. Without his knowing it the great possessions had taken the place of God in his heart, and he had come to rely on them instead of upon the One Eternal Stay of the immortal soul. He did not know the state of that soul of his, and so in his mercy Jesus reveals it to him. Had he known he would not have come with such enthusiastic love to the Saviour as though to take the Kingdom of Heaven by storm. Had he known it, it would not have caused him the keen, bitter sorrow it did to find that he could not obey his Master's call, and that there was still one thing wanting to him. "What a warning for us. He who thought himself to stand so securely at the day of trial falls miserably, not knowing that the Lord had departed from him" (Judges xvi, 20). This is the lesson for us then, that the Concupiscence of the Eyes is a danger for the very best amongst us. Whether we have money, or too keenly desire it, that treacherous evil within us can little by little open the door of our hearts to Mammon and deliver to him the keys of that citadel where God alone should reign.

But should you think that I am carrying this lesson too far, let me quote you our Lord's own comment on this sad scene:

"Then Jesus said to His disciples, Amen I say to you that a rich man shall hardly enter into the Kingdom of Heaven. And again I say to you: It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of Heaven." And when they had heard this the disciples were very

much astonished, saying, "Who then can be saved?" And Jesus beholding, said to them, "With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible."

It is impossible—that is the simple Word of Christ; and no word of man can exaggerate it—impossible without the help of God to have riches and not to depend on them. A man may be rich without being a drunkard or a profligate, but a man cannot of his own power be rich and not trust to his riches. That he does not believe this himself is no proof that our Lord's words are untrue. Let him be wise and take our Lord's words on faith, if in no other way, and pray for the help he most surely needs, lest an experience like that of the young man in the Gospel open his eyes, when too late, to the ruined state of his soul. "Woe to you that are rich *for you have your consolation*" (Luke vi, 24). That is the reason of their condemnation—they have their *consolation*. That is they have their desires fulfilled, they want for nothing. They can do without God. They have their daily bread without praying for it. They come at last to fall down and adore the prince of this world and cease to witness to the truth. "The Lord thy God shalt thou adore and Him only shalt thou serve."

Thus then does Christ, both by example and precept, teach us what we should never have learned of ourselves, that there is in the possession of riches a danger so great and subtle, that it can little by little ruin our spiritual life without our being conscious of it.

But now the Apostles, by the question they ask our Lord, teach us another lesson. "Who then shall be saved?" they say in astonishment, when our Lord had declared that the rich would hardly enter the Kingdom of Heaven. For that question shows us clearly that in their judgment the rich had the best right to the Kingdom of Heaven. Now I want to call your attention to this,

for that state of mind is not unknown here, though, of course, there is infinitely less excuse for it now. The Apostles before our Lord's coming had had bad teachers. The Pharisees, Our Lord said, were blind guides. Their worldliness had blinded them to heavenly things, and the heart of the people had grown gross. As God had allowed them divorce on account of the hardness of their hearts (Matt. xix, 8), so had He at times promised them earthly rewards for faithfulness in his service. But the scribes and Pharisees—the teachers of the people fixing their minds only on these earthy things and substituting for the plain word of God, the doctrines and commandments of men (Matt. xv, 9), and thus giving a low and material interpretation of *all* the *spiritual* promises, had come to regard riches as a sign of God's favor and poverty as a sign of His wrath. And *so* they taught the people. Hence the astonishment of the disciples at our Lord's new doctrines, as it seemed to them, and hence the question they asked Him. They are hardly to be blamed for it. They but gave expression to the popular sentiment of those they lived amongst and to lessons they had learned from their teachers. But it does show the danger of a wrong public opinion and the need of our Lord's warning "to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees."

Now I say what was a danger for the disciples is peculiarly a danger for you living here in this country. Worldliness is everywhere, but in no country perhaps has it assumed so religious and pharisaical an aspect, and in none therefore is its danger so threatening for the good.

If riches were a mark of God's love, surely Jesus would have been rich; and if poverty were a sign of reprobation, Jesus would not have embraced it. But He *became* poor for your sakes, that by *by* His poverty you might be rich. Alms-giving, Social-reform,

Slumming, are all excellent, but if they are done by those "who sound a trumpet before them," then it is pharisaical hypocrisy to call it religion. Men get their reward for that here, in votes and popular applause, and Christ knows them not. The almsgiving He praised was that of the woman who gave all she possessed and who like Himself became poor. This was the spirit of the early Christians who through love of Christ's poverty became poor themselves and shared what they had in common. You are not called upon to imitate Christ in this perfection of poverty. But you must have the spirit to admire. You must learn the lesson that the world's view on this point, even when couched in religious terms, is radically wrong and very dangerous. It tends to the worship of Mammon and dependence on Mammon, just as poverty makes us feel our dependence on our Father Who is in heaven. Therein lies the blessedness of the poor in spirit—they confess God, while the rich "witness to Mammon." If by prayer we acquire that spirit of acknowledging that what we have received, we have received from Him; and do not glory as though we have not received, but acknowledge that "the Lord has given and the Lord may take away": then, though our whole life be taken up in the winning of wages, or even if riches should abound and we dwell in the midst of plenty, we need fear no evil for we shall have learned the spirit of Jesus. The thorns that surround His Heart will have taught us detachment and the mortification of the Concupiscence of the Eyes, and our lives will witness to the truth that we are children of God and not the worshippers of Mammon. This is in fine the spirit urged upon us by the grand words of the Apostle with which I shall conclude:

"We brought nothing into this world and certainly we can carry nothing out. But having food and wherewith to be clothed, with

these we are content. For they that will become rich fall into temptations and into the snare of the devil and into many unprofitable and hurtful desires which drown men into destruction and perdition. *For the desire of money is the root of all evils—* which some coveting have erred from the faith, and entangled themselves in many sorrows. But thou—fly these things. Fight the good fight of faith; lay hold on Eternal Life whereunto thou art called and hast confessed a good Confession before many witnesses. I charge thee before God and before Christ Jesus, *who gave testimony under Pontius Pilate, a good Confession*, that thou keep the Commandment of God without spot, blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.” Amen (I Tim. vi, 7-14).

VIII. THE SPIRIT OF JESUS: RESTRAINT OF THE CONCUPISCENCE OF THE FLESH

"Blessed are the clean of heart for they shall see God."—Matt. v, 8.

SYNOPSIS.—I. *The thorns teach us the mortification of the concupiscence of the flesh.*

II. *The greatness of the danger of the concupiscence of the flesh.*

III. *Jesus' love of Chastity.—He helps us 1) by His example; 2) by giving us Mary.*

IV. *The Vision of Our Lady of Lourdes teaches us:*

1) *To love Chastity—by the beauty of the vision of Mary.*

2) *To pray—by the clasped hands.*

3) *To mortify ourselves—by the Rock.*

4) *By the words of Mary:*

a) *THANKFULNESS—which includes humility and joy for those who have not fallen.*

b) *LOVE—which is the price of pardon for those who have.*

The thorns around the Sacred Heart then teach us that the spirit of detachment from the riches of this world is essential to the Spirit of Jesus. "We cannot serve two Masters"; and so, to be loyal to God we must resolutely renounce the service of Mammon. We are to keep ourselves as "strangers and pilgrims in this world," remembering "we have not here a lasting city but we look for one that is to come."

But these thorns speak to us of another restraint to which I would now call your attention—the restraint of the carnal appetite—"the concupiscence of the flesh." The detachment of the Sacred Heart from the *pleasures* of the world is even more pressingly urgent upon us, and at the same time far more difficult to practise, than the detachment from the world's riches. For it would seem as though sensuality had eaten its way into the very heart of our cor-

rupt nature and had made itself essential to fallen man. Does not man make this the excuse for his excesses: "I cannot help my nature"—or, more blasphemously still—"Why has God made me thus?" Man is indeed of a composite nature—part angel and part animal—and it was God's design that man in his probation should make the angelic supreme—victorious over what in him was animal, and thereby should fit himself for the company of Angels hereafter.

"O Lord, our Lord," cries the Psalmist, "how wonderful is Thy name in the whole earth! What is man that Thou art mindful of him—or the son of man that Thou visitest him? Thou hast made him a little less than the Angels, Thou hast crowned him with glory and honor and has set him above the works of Thy hands. The beasts of the field and the birds of the air and the fishes of the sea, Thou hast made subject to him." (Ps. 8.) Thus did God make man. "And in the beginning man's heart was right"; and as he ruled the external world so did he rule the interior world of his nature by his enlightened reason: and bowed that reason in submission to God. He was "clean of heart," and so "he saw God" and held mysterious converse with Him in the Garden of Eden. But alas, he fell. "The woman saw that the tree was good to eat and fair to the eyes and delightful to behold, and she took of the fruit thereof and did eat, and gave to her husband who did eat." Thus were our first parents finally conquered by what was sensual and animal within them. And God fittingly punished them by clothing them in the skins of beasts and driving them out of Paradise. "Man when he was in honor did not understand: he is compared to senseless beasts and is become like to them" (Ps. 48, 13).

Once this dread evil of sensuality had gained the upper hand

in the heart of man, "all flesh corrupted its way," and was borne helplessly through nameless abominations down the steep path that leads to eternal ruin. God alone could save the work of His hands from utter destruction: and in His Wisdom He planned and in His power and love He wrought the means of our salvation:—

O loving wisdom of our God,
When all was sin and shame,
A second Adam to the fight
And to the rescue came.

O wisest love, that flesh and blood
Which did in Adam fail
Should strive afresh against their foe
Should strive and should prevail.

(Newman.)

Yes, the Eternal Son of God bent the Heavens and came down to earth, was born in a stable and died upon the Cross not merely to redeem us—to pay the price of our ransom, but as the second Adam, as flesh and blood, to teach us human beings how to fight and how to conquer this dread enemy of our nature and of our souls. He practised Chastity in the heroic degree of Virginity to lead our hearts to the love of this virtue. Virginity is not a command but a counsel which He bids us take if we are able; but Chastity we *must have* if we are to have part or lot with Jesus. In this world and in Heaven He is attended by virgins to mark His special predilection for this lovely virtue. His mother by a marvellous miracle is the immaculate virgin, St. Joseph his foster-father, St. John his precursor, and St. John, the beloved disciple, —His chosen body guard here are all virgins. And in Heaven St. John tells us, it is the Choir of Virgins who follow the Lamb whithersoever He goeth and to whom it is given to sing the new Canticle. No one can doubt, then, that this virtue is very dear to

the Sacred Heart or that Chastity is essentially necessary to us if we are to acquire any share in the Spirit of Jesus.

But Jesus, knowing how difficult is the practice of this virtue to our corrupt nature and yet how essentially necessary, has left us a very special source of help and strength in the protection of His Immaculate Virgin Mother. I want to ask you, then, you especially who love to call yourselves Children of Mary, to look on her whom God has given you as your great help in this most difficult virtue.

In these days, when the unregenerate heart of the world is not only, as it ever was, steeped in impurity, but, moreover, with even pagan shamelessness defends and even advocates its corruptions, Divine Providence has in the apparition at Lourdes recalled to men's minds the sweet vision of her whom even at the fall of man He had already predestined to crush the serpent's head. To her especially would He have us go in our great misery, and after the Blessed Sacrament it is from her most of all He would have us seek secure victory in our dread conflicts. We not only allow, but insist, that our nature is fallen and corrupt, and that man cannot of his own power hope to triumph over the flesh. Jesus Himself has said so: "Without Me you can do nothing." But surely it is man's own fault if he is without the help of Jesus. Who but the sinner himself is to blame if, blasphemously deriding the gracious source of strength which Jesus offers to him, he engage recklessly in the conflict only to perish miserably by the way? Let us, at any rate, dear children, "Behold our Mother" and see in her "Our life, our sweetness, and our hope."

It is over sixty years ago since the apparitions at Lourdes took place, but annual Pilgrimages that in the aggregate number more than a million pilgrims testify how fresh and living and universal

is the grateful memory of our Lady's goodness even to the present hour. Thus does the great Catholic world year by year honor and venerate her whom the Eternal King Himself has so delighted to honor. And it is right and fitting that we should look upon her now, and try to gain from the vision itself, regarded with the eye of Faith, some practical lessons for our guidance in the practice of our Lady's favorite virtue. You know the picture of her apparition well, and you can easily recall it to your mind. You see our Lady there as a youthful maiden clothed in a garment of spotless white, intensified by the deep blue of her girdle. She is standing on the rock above the entrance to the grotto. Her hands are clasped in prayer, and her eyes fixed, in an ecstasy of thankfulness, on God in Heaven whilst she proclaims the privilege He has bestowed upon her—"I am the Immaculate Conception"—a ravishing vision of Chastity of transcending loveliness. Would that, when temptation comes to us, we had ever the grace to recall it to our minds. Surely the foul fiend of impurity would be routed and put to flight by the very image in our minds of that beauteous apparition.

But now let us see what are the lessons that Our Lady here teaches us. The first is surely the loveliness of Chastity. Mary is the very personification of Chastity: and Mary, as St. Bernardine calls her, is the "Ravisher of Hearts." Even the hoary bigotry of Protestantism has melted away in her sweet presence, and poet after poet has sung her praise. One has even called her "Our tainted nature's solitary boast" (Wordsworth). But what men see, even with a poet's ken, is, after all, but the faint reflection of the beauty of her soul—"The Beauty of the King's daughter is within." It was that hidden beauty that, as the Saints say, ravished the heart of God Himself. "*Tota pulchra es*" ("Thou art all fair, O my Beloved, and there is no spot in thee"). The beauty of this heavenly

vision then raises our minds and hearts to realize and love the beauty of Chastity. It is useful, nay necessary, for us to have this love if we are to win "the reward of undefiled conquests" (Wisd. 2). The sentiments of the wise man we must make our own—"O, how beautiful is the chaste generation with glory; for the memory thereof is immortal, because it is known both with God and with men. When it is present they imitate it; and they desire it when it has withdrawn itself, and it triumpheth, crowned for ever, winning the reward of undefiled conflicts" (Wisd. 4, 1, 2). Such sentiments, I say, are necessary, for it is this love that will decide the issue of the conflict in those initial stages of the struggle which are so full of danger for us. "The soul that hesitates is lost." But the soul that really loves this virtue never allows itself to hesitate. Once the danger is recognized, love decides the matter. Pleasure, friendship, curiosity, enjoyment, all will be sacrificed at once when the loved virtue of Chastity is threatened. "Be a zealot for thy Chastity," is the advice of St. John Berchmans, and he means that to be secure we must go beyond what the world would call "commonsense and reasonable"—we must be *zealots* in our carefulness, to guard this lovely virtue from the faintest breath of corruption.

Next, our Lady is praying. Prayer is the furnace to which we draw near when, through slackness or trepidity, our love begins to languish. Some, of course, are tempted more than others; but we all need prayer. Love of Chastity depends upon it, and the heart that seems most secure will sooner or later succumb to temptation should love grow cold or reliance be placed on merely good natural dispositions. "If any man thinketh himself to stand let him take heed lest he fall" (1 Cor. x, 12). The God "who searcheth the reins and the heart," and who best knows "what is in man," has inspired his Apostle to tell us that Solomon, enlightened by God with more

than human wisdom, knew well that without humble prayer it is impossible to preserve Chastity. "As I knew that I could not otherwise be continent unless the Lord gave it (and this also was a point of wisdom to know whose gift it was), I went to the Lord and besought Him" (Wisd. 8, 21). The necessity of prayer, then, is the second lesson we can learn from this vision of Our Lady:—Prayer morning and night; prayer in time of temptation; and the blessed habit of ejaculatory prayer. Prayer especially to Our Lady herself. Say the three Hail Marys morning and night in honor of her Immaculate Conception with fervor and earnestness. Let it not be lip service you offer your Queen, but the full outpouring of your heart's longing to be like herself in love of Chastity, and realizing that it depends on her help. Then, during the day, remember St. Bernard's words: "In dangers, in straits, in difficulties, think of Mary, call on Mary. Let her name not leave your lips; let it never depart from your heart." For the name of Mary is all powerful, and if we get into the habit of pronouncing it we shall be as one always armed in the midst of dangers. For while Mary is beautiful as a "Tower of Ivory" for the good, she is strong as the fortress of David "against the wicked." "Fair as the moon, bright as the sun," but to her enemies "terrible as an army in battle array" (Cant. 6, 9).

But prayer without mortification would be of little use to us here; and we might take Mary's standing on the rock at Lourdes to remind us that Chastity has its roots in mortification. On the rock of Calvary—the rock of restraint and self-denial, this flower, so delicate in its bloom, so sweet in its fragrance, but alas, so easily blighted, finds its natural abode. We must make up our minds to it—that our hearts must be mortified if Chastity is to flourish there. What we know to be a dangerous occasion of sin

for us, must be given up. Here there can be no compromise. Cost what it may, we must free ourselves ruthlessly, if need be, from all dangerous entanglements. There are knots in the spiritual life, said Fr. Faber, that must be *cut*, we cannot stop to unravel them. It is no use asking our Lady to pray to God for us if we, of our own free choice, expose ourselves to what we know is dangerous for us. Our Lady could then not help us. It is an insult to ask her, for in reality we are but asking her to cooperate with us in the dread sin of "tempting God." Do let us try to understand this clearly. The Jews, we are told, asked Him a sign from Heaven, tempting Him. They asked for a miracle for no other reason than to gratify their own evil dispositions, and thereby Scripture says "they tempted God." Now consider, is not that just what the sinner does when he asks God to help him to escape unharmed from a temptation to which he of his own free will has rashly exposed himself? God has given him the grace to fly from that temptation. But that grace he did not want and he did not use. And having despised that he asks for another, and this other nothing less than a miracle—to be delivered from the fiery furnace into which he has with his eyes open recklessly cast himself. Now what is that but seeking a sign from Heaven, as the Jews did, merely to gratify his own evil disposition? And, moreover, God has expressly warned us against this attitude. "He that loveth the danger shall perish in it" (Eccli. iii, 27). And would Our Lady ask God to be false to His own Word, and make a mockery of His own warning, by saving one from perishing in a danger into which he had recklessly entered for no other reason than because he loved it? To suppose such a thing is, I say, simply to insult our Lady.

When the devil, then, tempts us to cast ourselves down from a position of safety, promising us that God will give His Angels

charge over us, let us learn to answer him with Jesus: "It is written thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God" (Matt. iv, 7).

Let us have no risks with our conscience, then. Conscience in a young woman who has been well instructed should be a safe and sufficient guide when the confessor or the mother cannot be consulted. That other people do things—read certain books, go to theatres, or picture shows, or dances—is no guarantee that we can do them with impunity. As we do not wish to judge what is good for others, so should we be strong to resist them judging what is good for us. "To his own lord each one standeth or falleth" (Rom. xiv, 4). And in this matter that lord is conscience. If your conscience tells you a thing is wrong for you, do not do it, though all the world should say it is right. Our conscience, of course, is not infallible, and here or there it may need instruction or correction; but it is the interior monitor that God has given to each of us, and faithfulness to its instructions is the surest way of coming to the knowledge of God's will in the end. "Be not conformed to this world," says the Apostle, "but be reformed in the newness of your mind, that you may prove what is the good and the acceptable and the perfect will of God" (Rom. xii, 2).

But let us remember we prepare ourselves to resist in these big temptations by the constant practice of mortification on small occasions. We must constantly avert our eyes "lest they behold vanity"—we must hedge up our ears with thorns, we must check levity, we must mortify curiosity—we must at times practise some little penance in the matter of eating and drinking. People are fond of telling us that God has given us good things to enjoy them. But "we thank God best for his good things," says a modern writer (Chesterton), "by our moderation in the use of them." I am not here urging you to any penance which has not the sanction of

obedience, but I earnestly want you to recognize the necessity of the lesson which we have gathered from this vision, that mortification must be practised if we are to overcome the concupiscence of the flesh.

"Now, lastly, let us consider Our Lady's words: "I am the Immaculate Conception." They were uttered not so much for the sake of the child who heard them as for the sake of the Universal Church. It was the sweet utterance of Our Lady's gratitude for the dogma of her greatest privilege which had just been defined. And her prayer spoken on earth for all the world to hear is directed to the Giver of all good gifts in Heaven. She is singing her Magnificat still—"My soul doth magnify the Lord and my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour. For He that is mighty hath done great things to me and Holy is His Name." I want you to note the humility which attributes all to God and the Joy with which Our Lady acknowledges it. Humility and Joy—here are two further helps to Chastity. If God has preserved us chaste, to Him with full hearts let us give the glory. It is Pride that "glories as if it had not received." And pride is proverbially near a fall. Spiritual writers tell us that God often allows his Saints to be tempted that they may preserve their humility. The instance of St. Paul is well known. "Lest the greatness of the revelations should exalt me, there was given me a sting of the flesh, an angel of Satan to buffet me. For which thing, thrice I besought the Lord that it might depart from me. And He said to me: "My grace is sufficient for thee: for power is made perfect in infirmity." Note those last words well. Power—that is, God's power—is made perfect—attains its end—secures the victory—in *infirmity*—when the infirmity is acknowledged. When we humble ourselves, that is, and own that without God we can do nothing—then does his power

conquer the enemy for us. You see, then, that as pride is a source of temptation, humility is the surest means of escape from the danger.

And Joy, too, we must have. Joy is a bright, modest little flower that grows in the soil of an humble heart. Whereas Melancholy is the soured, sinister offspring of Pride. It is a dangerous state of soul. "The devil," says St. Aloysius, "fishes in troubled waters." But God fills with perennial joy the heart of one who casts all his care on Him—who denies himself the tainted pleasures of this world that "he might taste and see how sweet is the Lord." Blessed are the clean of heart for they shall see God." That is the source of their joy. The clean of heart live in the presence of God. And that joy once experienced is held too precious to part with for all earth's passionate delights put together." To be with Jesus is a sweet paradise: to be without Jesus is a grievous hell (Imitation of Christ). Listen, then, to the great Apostle once more: "Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say rejoice. *Let your modesty be known to all me.* The LORD IS NIGH"—"and the peace of God which surpasseth all understanding keep your hearts and minds in Christ Jesus" (Phil. 4). The joy of the clean of heart is the joy of a good child in the presence of a loved and revered father—a joy restrained and modest, flooding the soul with such peace that it willingly sacrifices all other pleasure that would prevent its keeping the mind and heart in Christ Jesus.

Humility and joy, then, are the fruits of a grateful recognition, that it is God who is Mighty, that has done great things for us, if we have preserved unsullied the sweet lily of Chastity in our souls. But the word of Our Lady can bring encouragement to a heart that, alas, has not been so fortunate. "I am the Immaculate Conception" refers, as we have seen, to what took place in the soul of

Mary; but at the same time it can refer to what took place in the mind of God. From all Eternity we have each one of us lived in the thought of God. Of each of us He has had a distinct and individual conception. Beforehand He has seen what we would be, what His grace would enable us to do—to what height of sanctity we might attain, and what place in Heaven we might win. Now, we have all sinned and come short of the grace of God. We have spoilt God's ideal—we have marred His conception of us. Of all human beings only one has never sinned. Mary alone "heard God's word and kept it" perfectly. She alone fulfilled his ideal, and therefore she alone could say: "I am the Immaculate Conception," thereby proclaiming that God's conception of her had never been sullied. In this I say we can find a message of comfort to our souls. It reminds us that there are saints in Heaven and great Saints, too, who here below were not immaculate. And that, therefore, there is another way to Heaven besides the way of Innocence—the way of penitential Love. St. Peter fell. But he makes amends for his threefold denial by his threefold profession of love, and is restored at once to the position from which he had fallen. Of Magdalen Christ says: "Many sins are forgiven her because she has *loved much*," and the cry of the great Augustine's penitent heart is the cry of remorseful love: "O Beauty, ever ancient and ever new, too late have I known thee, *too late have I loved thee*. The lesson is the same in each case. Love, penitential love, can win back for us what our sins have lost:

"No star is lost that only once is seen,
We always may be what we might have been."

(A. PROCTOR.)

Lost innocence and lost ignorance we can never regain; but God's

favor and God's grace we can—and that, after all, is the great thing. Love is the key of Heaven—"the greatest of these is Charity." And remember this: God "will not quench the smoking flax." The love of God may be in the heart, but the flame may not be pure. God waits for better things. And Chastity it is that purifies this love, and removes from it all the smoke or alloy of earthly affection. What is so chaste, asks Brother Giles, as holy Charity? Chastity is something more than the mere, the negation of foul things, the mere resistance to impurity. It is the whiteness, the purity in the flame of perfect Charity. St. Francis, with arms stretched out in the form of a cross, his eyes fixed in ecstasy on Heaven, crying out the livelong night, "*Deus meus et omnia, Deus meus et omnia*" ("My God and my all, my God and my all!") has been ever regarded by the masters of the Spiritual life as a true example of perfect Chastity or the pure love of God alone.

In conclusion, then, beg of Our Lady to let you see from the thorns that encircle the heart of her Son that you must practise Restraint. And as it is His wish we should go to Mary to study this virtue, ask her to impress upon your minds the lessons of her apparition at Lourdes, to understand that you must love intensely this virtue: that you must pray and mortify your senses to preserve it: that if it has never been sullied in your soul, to God alone with grateful thanks the praise must humbly and joyfully be given. Or, that, if in any way the devil has scored a victory over you, then there is to be no despair, no discouragement, but that you must make up for the past by deep, sincere and penitential love of God in the future.

IX. THE SPIRIT OF JESUS: FRATERNAL CHARITY: KINDNESS

"A new Commandment I give unto you: that you love one another as I have loved you."—John xiii, 34.

SYNOPSIS.—1. *The wounded heart from which the flames of love are pouring on all sides represents the love of Christ not only for the friend but for the enemies, whose sins had pierced It.*

2. *His Commandment is NEW, because He gives His love as the Model of our love for our neighbor.*

3. *HE LOVED, 1st, in obedience to the Father's Will; 2nd, with restraint, i. e., He recognizes that those whom His Father had given Him were to be the object of His special affection; and He loved them REALLY, UNSELFISHLY, but with a love that was restrained and did not fear to rebuke when necessary.*

4. *To imitate, 1st HIS OBEDIENCE.—We must love for God's sake those whom God has given us (at home especially) with a love that is real and unselfish. 2nd, HIS RESTRAINT. By never allowing our love to become a weakness that in any way may cooperate with the sin of another.*

Jesus, as we have seen, then, came to conquer the World—to drive out from men's hearts the love of the World by teaching them how to overcome the Concupiscence of the Eyes, the Concupiscence of the Flesh and the Pride of Life that are within them. And in his Sacred Heart, (as He has revealed it to us) we have seen symbolized the Spiritual Weapons with which we are to fight this "Good Fight of Faith." *Obedience* in the "flames of love that embrace the Cross," *Restraint and mortification of corrupt natural inclinations* in the thorns that encircle the Heart. And now lastly we come to consider the wound that has pierced the Heart of Jesus. What does that teach us? "A new commandment I give unto you

that you love one another as I have loved you"—the lesson, the greatest of all, of "Brotherly Love."

We are not to suppose that the commandment was "new" in the sense that the Jews had never before been told to love their neighbor. But in this sense—that the love of Christians was to be modelled on the love of Christ and to become their distinguishing virtue. "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you have love one for another (John xiii, 35). The Jews seem to have evaded the commandment of brotherly love. The lawyer who tempted our Lord (Luke x, 27) shows how the word "neighbor" was a matter of dispute with them. They had quarrelled so much about its meaning that at last it had no meaning for them at all. And so Jesus restores the commandment to its dignity and gives it such surpassing importance that He can call it a *new* commandment. It was no longer the commandment they had confused and distorted by the doctrines and traditions of men. It was *NEW*—it was *HIS*—"My" Commandment He calls it a little later in His discourse (John xv, 12). Far removed for ever from their cavillings and disputations—His followers were to love one another *as He had loved them*.

But to love our neighbor truly is not only to keep Christ's special Commandment, but it is to give proof that we are living in the Spirit of Christ. "By this shall all men know that you are my disciples if you have love one for another. For just as harshness, greed and callous selfishness are characteristic of those who indulge their concupiscences and become worshippers of Mammon, so love for our neighbor—Charity unfeigned—is certain evidence of the conquest of the world and of the reign of Christ in the soul. By this we know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren" (I. John iii, 14).

For us, then, who are endeavoring to understand something of the Spirit of Jesus this Conference should have a special interest: for "The Love of Jesus" is that spirit—as we shall see—"the spirit of Obedience and Restraint"—exhibited to us in its most attractive form.

Because Jesus despised the world the world in turn hated Him. "Know ye," He said, "if the world hate you it hath hated me before you" (John xv, 18). But not for all that did He hate the souls that were in the world. No—for He himself tells Nicodemus: "God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish but may have life everlasting." "For God sent not His Son into the world to judge the world but that the world may be saved by Him" (John iii, 16, 17). And in obedience to His Father's Will, Jesus, as we have seen, became obedient unto death, even the death of the Cross. A proof of Obedience—yes, but a proof of His love for men too. "Greater love than this no man hath that he lay down his life for his friends" (John xv, 13). Aye, but Jesus was more than man and the Cross was evidence of even greater love than man was capable of, for there He laid down His life for his enemies. "For scarce for a just man," says St. Paul, "will one die: yet perhaps for a good man some one would dare to die. But God *commendeth His charity towards us* because when as yet we were sinners according to the time Christ died for us—when we *were enemies* we were reconciled to God by the death of His son" (Rom. v, 8).

The world hated Jesus then, but Jesus in obedience to His Father's Will and out of love for souls laid down His very life for that same world.

Rightly then can we take the wound in that Sacred Heart as proclaiming to us the love of Jesus. It is wounded, but flames are

pouring forth from it on every side, to show us it is loving still. "Father, forgive them for they know not what they do."

"Charity is patient—is kind" (I. Cor. xiii, 4). This is the patient—the forgiving love of Jesus, the love that filled His heart when He stretched out His hands to that city which so cruelly contradicted Him and cried out whilst the tears, unchecked, coursed their way down His sacred cheeks. "Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that stonest the prophets and slayest them that are sent to thee! How have I longed to gather thee as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wing and thou wouldst not!" Of this love we shall think in our next Conference. I merely mention now that I might return to it later on, and go on now to speak not of the patient but of the *active Charity* of Jesus—the Charity that is "kind."

"The Goodness and Kindness of God our Saviour hath appeared," says the Apostle (Tit. iii, 4). It appeared: it was made manifest, that is, for our instruction. We have to imitate it. Let us try then to note its characteristics. First, as we have seen, Jesus loved for God's sake. And loving for God's sake His love was true and sincere. And being true it was disinterested and unselfish. In other words, it was as I have said, the manifestation of his spirit—the spirit of Obedience and Restraint in its most attractive form.

Let me try to bring this home to you. At the Last Supper Jesus prayed for His disciples in a most beautiful and touching prayer. "I have manifested thy name," He says, "to the men whom Thou hast given Me *out of the world*. Thine they were and to Me Thou gavest them—I pray for them. I pray not for the world but for them whom Thou hast given Me" (John xvii, 6-9). You see the stress He lays on the fact that they were *given Him by His Father*. He had chosen them after a night of silent commune with His Father, as St. Luke so emphatically tells us. "And it came to pass

in those days that He went out into a mountain to pray and He passed the whole night in the prayer of God. And when day was come He called unto Him His disciples; *and He chose twelve of them*, whom He also named Apostles" (Luke vi, 12, 13). And on another occasion He insists most urgently on this truth: "No man can come to me except the Father Who sent Me draw him" (John vi). It is quite clear, then, that He recognizes in His Apostles men whom His Father had given Him to cherish with a special love. For that reason does He always treat them with such gentle courtesy and forbearance. They were His Father's gift to Him: and no matter what their shortcomings from a human point of view might have been, for His Father's sake He loved them tenderly.

But now—and this is an important point—it was A REAL love. I am the "*Truth*," said Jesus: and there was no make-believe about Him. Obedience to His Father urged Him to look with loving eyes on those whom that Father had given Him, but something else was wanting before He really loved them. Love to be true must come from a *particular motive*. You cannot love anybody "on general principles." It must be *personal* and *individual* to be real. You must see something in that person individually to have love for that particular person. And so our Lord's love was in the best sense discriminating. He loved Peter and He loved James: and He loved John: and He loved Judas—yes, bear to think of that. Judas was one of the Twelve, and because he had been given Him by His Father, Jesus really loved him. But He loved them all for different reasons. He loved Peter for what was in Peter and was *personal* to him—and John for what was in John and perhaps was not in Peter: and Judas and all the rest in precisely the same way. His loving eyes saw in each of those whom *God had given Him* a special individual personal attractiveness on which His love could

rest. Without that His love could not have been a true love. But His love was most certainly true, and therefore was it necessarily *personal*. But further, his love was disinterested—*Charity seeketh not her own*. For all its depth and sincerity he did not ask a return for it. His Father's Will was his one and sufficient reward. That is why, though He knew who it was that should betray Him, He could behave with such constant love towards Judas that when He announced that one was about to betray Him, not one of the Apostles had the faintest suspicion who it was. He had no thought of Himself or of His slighted love then. He thinks only of them. "Friend," he says to Judas at the end, "Whereto art thou come? (Matt. xxvi, 50). Dost thou betray the Son of Man with a kiss?" (Luke xxii, 48). And he submitted His cheek to the traitor. What but love entirely forgetful of itself, of what was due to it—of its own dignity—could have remained so tenderly kind under such black, cold-hearted ingratitude? "*Charity seeketh not her own*" (I. Cor. 13), and Jesus thought only of saving his Apostle.

It is, too, on account of this unselfishness of His love that, when occasion demands it, and it is for their spiritual good, He does not hesitate to rebuke and correct His Apostles. Once, St. Luke tells us: "When great multitudes stood about Him so that they trod upon one another, He began to say to His disciples, Beware ye of the leaven of the pharisees which is hypocrisy" (Luke xii, 1). And commentators see here a public warning amounting to a rebuke—to guard his disciples from vain glory. Time and again does He bewail their want of faith. Their boasting He rebukes by setting a child in the midst of them, saying, "Unless you be converted and become as little children you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. xviii, 2-3). And we have already considered His very stern rebuke to His chief Apostle: "Go behind me, Satan, thou

art a scandal to me: because thou savorest not the things that are of God but the things that are of men" (Matt. xvi, 23).

It is clear, then, that His love, forgetful of itself, was mindful only of their soul's welfare and of His Father's business. He sought not their esteem or popularity or any return for His love. He wished only to do them spiritual good.

Well, now, my dear children, there is our model: "This is My Commandment that you love one another as *I have loved you*." Jesus' love was obedient and restrained. He loved because His Father willed it, with a love that was true and sincere. And His love was unselfish—It sought not its own—that is, it was mortified or Restrained.

First and foremost then our love must be for God—that is, we must recognize that we are to love our neighbor because such is the Will of our Father in Heaven. "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end" (Apoc. xxii, 13). All must be for God. This Charity is to be a supernatural work. St. Francis de Sales, raised up by God, as we might well suppose, to preach by work and word the sweetness of the love of Jesus, said something that so gentle a Saint would never have said were it not that he was convinced of its truth and desired to convey a serious lesson by saying it. It was this: "Some young women are angels abroad and devils at home." Coming from so meek a Saint it does sound somewhat harsh—but is there one of us able to deny it? Alas, how forgetful are they and how forgetful are we all of the home of Nazareth. Thirty out of the three and thirty years of Jesus were passed in that little home: and for most of those even who call themselves Christians it is as though He had never lived them at all. Those thirty years are simply lost years. Let us at any rate now at last recognize that unless the home life is for us

an essential part of our spirituality, we need have no hope of acquiring the Spirit of Jesus. Look round the members of your family at home as Jesus looked upon His Apostles at the Last Supper, then pray to your Father in Heaven, as He did, not for the world but for those whom God has given you out of the world. You have not chosen them but God has in very truth chosen them for you. They are souls *that need your help*: and God has given them to you that you might give them that help. Do open your eyes and see. Heaven is being lost or won in your family circle—the struggle is going on all round you, and can you be indifferent? The Church, the school, the companions of later life—every influence, sacred or profane—good, bad or indifferent—is almost powerless against the influence of the home. Almost any priest can point to men and women, in his own experience, whose lives here have been rendered miserable, and even whose salvation has been imperilled, by the influence of that home life. They have gone under in the struggle because the kindness which God intended should be their rest and encouragement at home was wanting to them. A young woman dying in a workhouse told me she would not make her confession because, she said, “Before you give me absolution you will tell me I must forgive my sister.” “Now,” she said, “if this were my last breath I’d say it—I never will forgive her.” It so happened I knew that sister to be a good girl: but something she had said or done, not out of malice, but thoughtlessly, had entered into the young woman’s heart: had rankled there and poisoned it: until, as I found her, she was actually dying in despair. Believe me, there is a dreadful responsibility attaching to the life at home. You cannot come in such close and constant contact with human souls without influencing them for good or ill in their struggle for Heaven. You would not, I know, maliciously do them spiritual harm. But are you as

anxious as Jesus would have you be for the spiritual good of those whom God has given you? You are not asked to preach or give advice. Still less to find fault or to scold (these things may be well enough on occasion), but all that I ask of you now is to be "*kind*." "And be ye kind to one another, merciful, forgiving" (Eph. iv, 32). God's grace can work salvation in another's heart once it gains an entrance there. What if that grace is waiting on your kindness to find it—that entrance? And what, alas, if your unkindness should sour that heart and close it fast against God's saving mercy?

Realize, then, your responsibility and dread to be unkind in thought, or word, or deed. But for your encouragement try to understand, too, your privilege. God has given you souls to save. He has chosen them out of the world for you. "If you save a soul," says St. Augustine, "you predestinate your own." Then, my dear children, neglect not so great salvation. Do not let the part of God's great gift overtake you. Resolve to save your own soul by saving the souls that God has given you by true and consistent charity. Be *an angel at HOME*, then no one will find fault with you for being an angel *ABROAD*.

For if charity begins at home, it is not to stop there. It must be there or it is doubtful if it exists at all. But granted its firm existence there, then it can and ought most certainly to look abroad. Your neighbors claim your love as well as your family. They are all God's children. "You can make your friends," says Chesterton, "you can make your enemies, but God made your next door neighbor." God has made that soul and brought her near to you that you might win for yourself the grace and privilege of being "good neighbor" unto her. Some people rather pride themselves on not "making neighbors," as they say. And yet Christ teaches us to regard it as a privilege. "Which of these three," he asks of the

lawyer who tempted him, "in thy opinion was neighbor to him that fell among robbers." And he said: "He that shewed mercy to him." And Jesus said to him, "Go and do thou in like manner." What does that mean but simply go and become a neighbor, go and earn for yourself that glorious title by showing mercy and kindness to others? And if you have been fond of the expression in the past, be warned against it for the future. "I never make neighbors" should only be mentioned with sorrow in the confessional, together with a firm purpose of amendment.

In short, then, we must love and be kind to everybody whom our love can reach. We must be "neighbor" to every child of God, for God has made all, God loves all, and God wishes us to love all. Loving from this motive is to love "for God's sake." Now, I want to consider what is sometimes called "loving people for God's sake," which, unfortunately, is quite a different thing. There are some good and pious people who make use of that phrase simply to evade the commandment. Altogether, a neighbor does not come up to their requirements of loveableness—is not quite the "it"—as the Americans say—and so they ignore her. They don't *hate* her. They wish her no harm. They suppose she is a good woman. She is at church and the Sacraments as often as they are themselves, so of course they have nothing against her. But really, in many ways, she is quite "impossible." Anything like friendship or cordiality with her is entirely out of the question. But still, of course, there's the Commandment and—well, they suppose that somehow it's all right: and they love her for God's sake. Now what does that really mean? Father Faber (another sweet and saintly soul) has said another harsh word which I must quote for you: "Pious people," he says, "are an unkind lot." It's too good to be altogether true.

Pious people are sometimes the kindest of the kind, but there's enough truth in it to make it live. With certain such pious people it would almost appear as if common or ordinary kindness were—so to speak—off the map of their spirituality. It is such a very trivial every-day affair. And they have so many higher spiritualities to look after. So where it is inconvenient they simply ignore it, and say, as we see, they love people “for God's sake.” Now what does it mean? Mr. Belloc has written an amusing little story of a man who suffered from Veracitytis. By a mischance a nerve behind his ear had become affected, with the alarming result that thereafter he was obliged at all times to tell the exact truth. He soon became involved in hopeless difficulties. He told his friends just what he thought about them. He ruined a Company of which he was a Promotor by giving a veracious account of the true inwardness of some of its most advertised transactions. And as a Cabinet Minister he got his whole party into serious trouble by telling the exact truth even in the House of Commons itself. Of course that was the end of all things.

Now supposing one of these good pious ladies I have been speaking of, were by some happy chance to succumb to an attack of “Veracitytis,” and were to address herself to you with whom, let us suppose, she could not manage to agree. “My dear Mrs. So-and-so,” she would say quite cheerfully, not knowing she was suffering from “Veracitytis,” “one might as well say a thing as feel it; I really can't bear the sight of you. I wish you were a thousand miles away. I have a kind ‘of all over feeling’ whenever you come near me. I can't help saying to myself as soon as I see you, ‘Oh, here's that woman again.’ For you know, everything in you and about you sets my nerves on edge. The way you walk; the way you talk; your whole manner and appearance is really more than

I can stand. But there—there's no use talking about it. What can't be cured must be endured; and as I don't suppose you could ever be persuaded to do anything so obliging as to leave the parish, I shall have to put up with you somehow. Of course. I don't hate you—you understand—we are both pious practising Catholics, and I know well enough that I can't do that. In fact, I suppose as I keep all the Commandments that I really love you. But don't let there be any silly misunderstanding about it. Let me be quite frank. If I do love you, it is simply and solely because it is God's Commandment, and for no other reason under Heaven." Now could you not say in all sincerity and truthfulness to that woman, "Thank you for nothing." For is not that just what it is? To neighbors they don't like they offer a neat little box labelled "love for God's sake," but there's nothing inside it. Of course, they make believe they are offering you a very valuable present, but when they are suffering from Veracityitis they don't mind telling you the worth of it.

Now honestly, this is a very serious matter. It may very well be that these people are living in a fool's paradise about their spiritual state. They would be angry with me if I told them they didn't love God. "Look at all the prayers we say," they'd cry indignantly. And of course prayers are a good test of the love of God. But St. John gives a better: "He that loveth not his brother whom he seeth, how can he love God whom he seeth not" (I. John, iv, 20). And St. Peter recommends prayers. "Be prudent, therefore, and watch in prayers"—but he immediately adds: "But before all things have a constant mutual charity" (I. Peter, iv, 7).

Now let us see what it really is to love for God's sake, as Jesus loved His Apostles. There is a neighbor with whom naturally speaking you don't agree. You must be prepared for that. There may be no

fault on either side. You are of different dispositions and you and she can no more help having different dispositions than you can help having different faces. "Star differeth from star," says St. Paul of the Saints, and it is as true of their dispositions as it is of their glory. It is quite possible that Syntiche and Evodia, for instance, never really understood one another till they reached Heaven. But sometimes there is fault. Examine and see first if it is on your side. There may be something in your own manner or conduct that a little humility would show you is the cause of your not being of "one mind" with your neighbor. "Thou hypocrite," says Christ, "cast out first the beam out of thy own eye and then thou shalt see to cast out the mote of thy brother's eye" (Matt. vii, 5). Or the fault may really lie altogether at the door of the neighbor.

Well now, remember it is just in bearing with another's defects that we keep the command of Jesus to love one another—"Bear ye one another's burdens and so you shall fulfil the law of Christ (Gal. vi, 2). Be quite sure that God loves that neighbor and He knows her better than you do. When someone tells you that one whom you love dearly is "disagreeable or queer," you resent it and say, "Oh, you really don't know her." Don't you think God feels hurt when we have the impertinence to find fault with one of His friends. We don't know her and we are too proud or too lazy to find out the good qualities for which God loves her. We shall never love anyone unless we know her—but to know her we must for God's sake, feel kindly disposed towards her. We must look on her with the eyes of love as the mother looks upon even the ugly duckling. For Stevenson's paradox is true, "The royal road to know anybody is to love him."

One last word about restraint. I have already spoken of Chas-

tity, so I need not speak of a great and obvious danger here. But it is quite clear that love for another which is weak enough to acquiesce in any sin cannot be for God. "Charity seeketh not her own." And if your love for your neighbor smiles in silent approval when God is being offended by backbiting, calumny, lies or malice, or other sins, then yours is not true charity, for you are "seeking your own"; your own pleasure or amusement, and not loving God. If we are to love as Christ loved, our love must be restrained. We must aim at seeking no return and at being ready to lose friendship rather than offend God. But our love must not in consequence sink into "aloofness." St. Peter speaks, you see, of "*mutual*" charity which implies not only a readiness *to give*, but a hearty willingness *to receive*. Of course there is risk of "attachment." But, apart from the Sixth Commandment, that risk is often a spiritual "bogey." In any case we must take that risk. The power of mutual charity is a "*talent*" which God has given us to use "as stewards" says St. Peter, "of the manifold grace of God." If pious people, through fear, but inane fear, of becoming too attached to creatures and thereby losing the love of God, hide that talent, it will, I fear, fare badly with them at the end. "Wicked and slothful servant," our Lord will say to them, "thou oughtest to have committed my money to the bankers. Take ye away, therefore, the talent" (Matt. xxv, 27). They are rebuked and punished precisely because they would not take the risk. Nay, that which they seemed to have—the love of God itself—is lost to them. "Take ye away the talent, for he that loveth not his brother whom he seeth—how can he love God whom he seeth not" (I. John iv, 20).

Let us resolve then, in imitation of Christ, to have that Charity which is *kind* (I. Cor. xiii)—a love of God which shows itself in *true* and *unselfish* kindness to our neighbor. Without love of God

even the giving all we have to feed the poor will profit us nothing (I. Cor. xiii), but with this love, though we may not think of it at the moment, the least kind act we do to our neighbor, God will take as done to Himself, and it will merit for us an eternal reward (Matt. xxv).

X. THE SPIRIT OF JESUS: FORGIVENESS

"Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy."—Matt. v, 7.

SYNOPSIS.—1. *The Spirit of Jesus is the Spirit of Forgiveness, as St. John learned and taught us in the interviews he describes which our Lord had (1) with Nicodemus; (2) the woman at the well; (3) the woman brought to Him for condemnation.*

2. *To be like Jesus then—to be children of God—to have our sins forgiven we must forgive.*

3. *We must forgive from our heart. "I forgive but I don't forget" sometimes admissible, sometimes not.*

4. *The advantage of forgiveness. St. John Gualbert.*

5. *The difficulty: to forgive on a big occasion we must have learned mercy and meekness already. We learn it by constant practise, e. g. St. Francis de Sales. Especially by never taking offense. The advantage of this.*

We have thought of the "Charity that is kind," and now we go on to think of the "Charity that is patient" (I. Cor. 13). It is typified for us in the broken Heart of Jesus—pierced and bleeding but loving and merciful still. We are aiming at the spirit of that Heart—that is, we are aiming at perfection. It is high I grant you. But we agreed to aim high:

A man's reach should be beyond his grasp!

Or what's Heaven for?

Even though we never grasp what we can scarcely reach, Heaven will be our reward for striving. It is God's will. "Be ye perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" is the word of Christ to us. We want His spirit. We want to be like Him. We want to be children of God. And hard though it is, we are not to be frightened from trying. We dare not; for not to try is to go over to the enemy. "He that is not with Me is against Me," and by God's grace that is not going to happen again to us.

Now I say that by this "Charity that is patient" we can acquire the spirit of Jesus and become the Children of God; and without it we shall most certainly go over to the enemy and lose our soul.

"Learn of me," says Jesus, "because I am meek and humble of heart," and it is from His acts of "the charity that is patient," that is forgiving, that endureth all things, in other words, from His merciful love of sinners, that we are to learn that lesson. It was thus St. John, the Apostle of love, learnt it. For he, too, had to learn like the rest of us. There was a time when he was not the Apostle of love, when he had not the spirit of meekness. St. Luke tells us that once Jesus, when going through Samaria to Jerusalem, sent messengers before His face; and going they entered a city of the Samaritans to prepare for Him, and they received Him not, because His face was of one going to Jerusalem. And when His disciples James and John had seen this they said: wilt Thou that we command fire to come down from Heaven to consume them? And turning He rebuked them, saying: "*You know not of what spirit you are.* The Son of Man came not to destroy souls, but to save" (Luke ix, 52).

In those days, then, St. John knew not the spirit of meekness of his divine Master, nor His tender forgiving love for the souls He had come to save. Afterwards, thanks be to God, for his own sake and for ours he did know that spirit and was inspired by God in a special manner to teach it to us. He learnt it when at the last supper he rested his head on the sacred Breast of the Saviour and felt the beatings of that loving Heart for man. He learnt it when standing with Mary at the foot of the Cross he heard the tender plea for pity "Father forgive them for they know not what they do," and, when turning to the thief, who asked for pardon almost before the sound of blasphemies had died away, "This day," said

Jesus, "thou wilt be with Me in paradise." Then surely John realized of what spirit he was; then must he have understood that with Jesus there was no question of vengeance, of bringing down from heaven the fire of divine wrath, but only the desire to pardon and to save. But more clearly still when the Holy Ghost had brought all things to his mind did the lesson of that marvelous life come home to this Apostle of Love. Then did it seem to him that every word and deed of Jesus had been but a new revelation of the love of God for sinners and a fresh incentive for us to love our neighbor and forgive our enemies.

The two great truths that stand out prominently above all others in St. John's Gospel are that Jesus is "the Word" or the Revelation of God, and that the God he reveals is a "God of love." For God is charity (1 John iv). In words simple indeed but of unsurpassed sublimity he begins his gospel by proclaiming the eternal generation and divinity of the Word "that was made flesh and dwelt amongst us." That Word was Jesus of Nazareth. And just as a word you utter reveals the hidden thought in your mind, so the Word had come to reveal to us the hidden God. That God had ever loved the creature He had made, "My thoughts towards you," He had said, "are thoughts of peace," thoughts of love and reconciliation, thoughts of forgiveness and pardon. But never had that love been fully revealed to man till the "Word was made flesh and dwelt amongst us," then, indeed, could it be said: "The goodness and kindness of God our Saviour hath appeared" (Tit. 3, 4). That is the theme of St. John's Gospel that the kindness of God appeared in the mercy and love Jesus showed to sinners.

It is well for us to dwell on this, that we might take in the great lesson of the beloved disciple. It seems to have been his inspiration to bring home to us by vivid and intensely real pictures the

mercy of Jesus as revealed to this or that particular man or woman. That mercy had already been preached, of course, by the other Evangelists. But to St. John it was left to give the revelation, that touch of vital interest which so rivets our attention and steadies our gaze and stamps the impression when we see that mercy displayed to individuals. Its effect is to make us say with St. Paul: "He loved me and delivered Himself for me" (Gal. 7-20), which is just what St. John would have us say.

Out of the many individual interviews of which St. John gives so clear an account let me remind you of three: with Nicodemus, with the woman at the well, and with the woman brought to Him for condemnation.

To Nicodemus, who comes to Him by night, He speaks as to one learned in the law and the scriptures. He encourages this weak man's timid spirit and raises his soul to confidence. "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert," He says to him, "so must the Son of Man be lifted up that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish but may have life everlasting. For God so loved the world as to give His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him may not perish but may have life everlasting" (John iii, 14). The good seed sown in that timorous heart bore fruit at last when the Son of Man was indeed lifted up, and Nicodemus taking his courage in his hands went with Joseph who boldly demanded from Pilate the broken Body of Jesus, and together with him laid it in the sepulchre.

With the woman at the well the same loving mercy wins the same victory of conversion. He greets her gently when she comes with her pitcher for water. "Give Me to drink," He says to her. Then when she is at her ease with Him, He tells her so quietly and gently of her sins that she is not repelled or frightened. No, she grows

subdued and contrite. "Sir," she says, "I perceive that Thou art a prophet." Which was an acknowledgment of the truth of what He said and a confession of her sins. Jesus had won her. All that remained now to be done was to reveal Himself to her. She gives Him the opportunity. "I know," she says, "that the Messiah cometh, who is called Christ, therefore when He is come He will tell us all things." And Jesus is quick to take it. "I am He who am speaking with thee." At once does she know the gift of God and who it is who said to her "Give Me to drink." "The woman therefore," says St. John, "left her waterpot and went her way into the city and saith to the men there, 'Come and see a man who hath told me all things whatsoever I have done, is not He the Christ?'" (Jn. iv). "She came to Him a sinner," says St. Augustine, "she goes her way a preacher." And lastly, oh how little did they who brought to Him the sinful woman know of what spirit He was. "He that is without sin amongst you let him cast the first stone at her," is His chilling answer to their challenge to Him to condemn her. And when hearing this they went out one by one beginning at the eldest, Jesus said to her, "Woman, where are they that accused thee. Hath no man condemned thee?" She said, "No man, Lord." And Jesus said, "Neither will I condemn thee. Go and now sin no more" (John viii).

St. John gives several other of these beautiful interviews with individual souls, but I have chosen these three, for they have this connection with my subject that they show Jesus dealing with those who in one way or another were His enemies. Nicodemus was a Pharisee; the woman at the well was a Samaritan, and the other woman was a sinner. See then how Jesus treats His enemies. He not only *lets* them come to seek His pardon, but He goes out of His way to offer it to them. He shows His anxiety. He demeans Him-

self before them, as men might say, to make reconciliation an easy matter for them. And note, it is all done by His Father's will. "God sent His Son," we have heard Him say to the Pharisees, "that the world may be saved by Him." "My meat is to do the will of Him that sent Me, that I may perfect His work," is His explanation of His talk to the Samaritan woman. And when it was objected to Him "this man receiveth sinners and eateth with them" (Luke xv, 2) He justifies His conduct on this same ground. In the parables of the "Lost Sheep," the "Lost Piece of Money" and the "Prodigal Son," by which He replies to that charge, He shows how there is joy before God and His angels upon one sinner doing penance (Luke *ib.*).

What wonder then that St. John should be enlightened by the Holy Ghost to see in the life of Jesus, above all things else, the revelation of the love of God for sinners. And that, consequently, He should gather from that life, as its chief lesson, that we should love all men as brethren, even though men may not love us. "In this is charity," he says, "not as though we had loved God, but because He hath first loved us and sent His Son to be a propitiation of our sins. My dearest, if God hath so loved us we ought also to love one another. If any man say I love God and hateth his brother he is a liar. For he that loveth not his brother, whom he seeth, how can he love God whom he seeth not" (1 John iv, 10 *sq.*).

Here, then, is the Apostle's teaching. At one time, as we have seen, he wanted to bring down fire from heaven upon his enemies. But he had learnt his lesson. He knew at the end "of what spirit he was," and he tries to teach it to us. May he pray for us now that these words of Jesus which contain this lesson may sink deep into our heart and bring forth fruit and patience.

"You have heard that it has been said thou shalt love thy neigh-

bor and hate thy enemy ; but I say to you love your enemies, do good to them that hate you and pray for them that persecute and calumniate you that you may be the children of your Father Who is in Heaven, Who maketh His sun rise upon the good and bad ; for if you love them that love you, what reward shall you have? Do not the publicans this? And if you salute your brethren only, what do you more? Do not also the heathens this? Be ye therefore perfect as your heavenly Father is perfect" (Matt. v, 43 sq.).

To love those who love us is no virtue. We do it without effort, it is natural to us. We should be monsters—"monsters of ingratitude" is the word men would use of us—did we act otherwise. Jesus expects something more than that if we are to have His spirit. To merit His reward, to become children of our Father in Heaven, to advance in perfection, we must learn to love our enemies. Blessed are the merciful for they shall obtain mercy. Blessed because imitating their divine Model they have become children of God and heirs to the kingdom of heaven. But woe to those who are not merciful. The text implies that for them there shall be no mercy. And St. James expressly declares, "Judgment without mercy to him that hath not done mercy" (Jas. ii, 13). It is quite necessary for us then to consider this darker aspect of the subject.

"If you will not forgive men, neither will My Father forgive you your offences," says our Lord (Matt. vi, 15). Now look at this crucifix and see what your offences are. See these thorns, these nails, this open side, this bruised and broken Body dripping blood; that is your work if you have sinned grievously. "They who sin grievously crucify again to themselves the Son of God, making Him a mockery" (Heb. vi, 6). Now Jesus says unless you forgive, your Heavenly Father will not forgive you *this*. Whatever we have to forgive, surely we have much more to be forgiven. It is really an

easy bargain for us. But our salvation may depend upon it. God has been most merciful to us, but Jesus clearly warns us we shall lose all right to that mercy unless we are merciful to others. That warning is in the concluding words of our Lord's parable of the unjust servant. "Then," says Christ, "his lord called him and said to him, 'Thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all the debt—shouldst not thou then have had compassion on thy fellow servant, even as I had compassion on thee?' And his lord being angry delivered him to the tortures. So also shall My Heavenly Father do to you if you forgive not every man his brother from your hearts" (Matt. xviii, 32 sq.).

Let us make up our minds then that we can hope for mercy only so far as we are merciful to others. And note our Lord says "*from your hearts.*" We may deceive our confessors, we may deceive ourselves, but we cannot deceive God. It is no use telling Him we forgive unless we really do forgive from our hearts. I forgive but I won't forget is a saying which like "I love for God's sake" is capable of a quite satisfactory meaning, but, unfortunately, is often used as a "cloak for malice." I won't forget may be simply the statement of a fact. God does not command impossibilities; and sometimes to forget an injury is a sheer impossibility. In the life of St. Jane de Chantal, for instance, we read how when her husband was accidentally shot by a friend of his when out with a shooting party, her grief for a time seemed utterly inconsolable. Saint though she was, even then, she could not bring herself to see or speak with the man who had shot her husband. But never for a moment did she harbor bitter or revengeful thoughts against him. She might say with perfect truth but without sin "I shall never forget"—for the memory of her cruel loss had become part of her very existence. But all the time with the whole strength of her iron will she battled

with, and finally conquered, all feelings of revolt and resentment that for more than a year struggled for mastery within her soul. With her then the impossibility of forgetting made her forgiveness all the more heroic and meritorious.

But there are those with whom "I forgive but I won't forget" means simply "I'll bide my time. I can do nothing at present, so I'll forgive—but I won't forget. I'll take very good care of that. I shall watch my opportunity, and when it comes I'll get my own again." They may deceive their confessor by saying, "I forgive," they may even deceive themselves, I say, but they cannot deceive God. Think of such a one praying to God "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive them that trespass against us." Remember, these are Christ's own words, and He has clearly explained what He means by them. You might honor Him with your lips, but if your heart is far from Him be sure He knows it. And if you don't forgive from your heart, then, no matter what words you say, "My Father will not forgive you your offences"—will be His word to you.

Now I don't want you to feel discouraged about this. I said it was asking something very hard of you. But do remember it is not I who am asking it; it is Jesus. We cannot alter that. If we are to reach heaven, it must be by fulfilling His conditions, not our own. And that is one of them. But since it is His commandment, then be quite sure He will give you the grace to fulfil it, if you ask Him, "ask and you shall receive." "His commandments," says St. John, speaking especially of charity, "are not heavy" (1 John v, 3). If we find it burdensome, then it is our own fault, because we forget our Model and we do not ask His help.

But now if you do make up your mind to forgive some real wrong or injustice that has been done to you, you will most surely find

that that heroic act of charity and mercy is its own reward. The words of Christ will be singing in your ears and making melody in your heart. Forgive and you shall be forgiven (Luke vi). There is no simpler, straighter, more absolute promise in holy Scripture than that. It almost makes us wish that we really had something worth while to forgive that we might go to Jesus and say "Forgive me, for from my heart I forgive my brother, and Thy promise stands though heaven and earth should pass away. Forgive and you shall be forgiven."

I have told you of a soul that risked salvation rather than forgive. But how many are there now in Heaven, on the other hand, who are there because they overcame resentment and forgave an injury. One at least is a canonized Saint. When a boy, his brother had been slain in a quarrel. And the young John Gualbert was brought up with the thought of the vendetta, of the day of revenge, burnt into his soul. That was to be his great achievement, to revenge his brother's murder. When he had reached man's estate, on a certain Good Friday he was riding armed and attended through a pass in the hills outside Florence, when suddenly he came upon his life-long enemy. There was his brother's murderer, delivered, as it seemed, into his hands, for he was without weapons and unattended. The unfortunate wretch thus found himself suddenly face to face with the long-threatened punishment of his guilty deed. Those were turbulent days in Italy, as elsewhere, those early days of the thirteenth century, but they were days of faith. His supreme peril brought his religion to his mind. Throwing himself on his knees before his adversary already advancing to slay him, and stretching out his arms in the form of a cross: "Pardon," he cried, "pardon for the love of the Saviour who died for His enemies to-day." And oh! thanks be to God for the

victory of Faith, John Gualbert dismounted from his horse, and kneeling in the road by the murderer of his brother he threw his arms around him and kissed him: "Yes," he said, "for the love of Christ, who died for us both on Good Friday, I do forgive you."

And that act, I say, made him a saint. He rose from his knees. He went into a neighboring shrine, and there before the image of his Crucified Saviour he poured out his soul in tears of heartfelt repentance for his life of hatred and bitter enmity. The merciful God showed by a miracle how pleased He was with that great act of mercy. The figure on the Cross bowed its head towards him in token of His pardon and forgiveness. Following the inspirations of grace John Gualbert shortly after determined to leave the world. He sold his possessions and gave the proceeds to the poor and entered a monastery of very strict observance. There he passed many years in the practice of great austerity and penance and died at last in the odor of sanctity, and we honor him on the Church's altars throughout the world to-day as St. John Gualbert.

If you find it hard to forgive, then look at your crucifix again. Let the wounds plead with you as with this saint. Then hear St. John appeal once more: "My dearest, if God has so loved us, ought we not therefore to love one another?" (1 John iv, 11).

Now there are two remarks I should like to make about that act of forgiveness. The first is that opportunities of performing heroic acts of mercy occur but seldom in a lifetime, and that when they do—except as in this case a perfect miracle of grace intervene to assist one—they will be seized only by those whose hearts have already been rendered merciful by the constant practice of mercy and meekness in the ordinary affairs of every-day life. Great acts of mercy cannot be suddenly forced out of a hardened heart. They flow spontaneously from a kind heart.

The quality of Mercy is not *strained*,
It droppeth as the gentle rain from Heaven
Upon the place beneath. It is twice bless'd:
It blesseth him that gives: and him that takes.

St. Francis de Sales is, as you know, looked upon as the great model of meekness even amongst the servants of God. Now it was only by constant practice that he acquired this habit of virtue, for in his youth he was of a quick and somewhat hasty temperament. We have proof of this from his own lips. When a bishop and advanced in years, it was his duty to refuse to a certain man a favor he had come some distance to beg of him. The man urged his plea good-temperedly enough at first. But finding the saint firm in his refusal he gave way to violent anger and poured out his pent up wrath in most vile and insulting language to the holy bishop. When at last the man flung out of the room and the storm was over, the bishops secretary, who had been present at the interview, could no longer restrain his amazement. "My Lord," he cried, "how could you remain so calm and unruffled under the lies and insults of that wretched man?" The saint with a smile then made this revelation: "For five and twenty years I have been striving to gather together a little stock of meekness, and do you think it would have been wise to lose it all in a moment on such a man as that?"

Five and twenty years—think of that. Be quite sure that the grace of God will not be wanting to you in the big events of life if only you correspond to it faithfully in the small events. Acquire mercy by the daily practice of little acts of mercy; forgiving, as Jesus told St. Peter, not seven times only, but seventy times seven times, and when the big chances come of showing yourself a child of God by an act of forgiveness, which the world in its folly would condemn as a weakness, you will do good to your own soul and save

your neighbor, too, as a good steward of the manifold grace of God. "It blesseth him that gives, and him that takes."

Now as to how we are to practice this spirit of meekness and mercy in our daily lives, I shall give you one piece of advice and only one that you may remember it. It is this: Make up your mind "never to take offence." If you cannot excuse the word or act that insults you, at any rate you can generally with a little good will, excuse the intention. As a rule God only can know the full intention. Leave it to God then and do not waste time trying to be as God, knowing good and evil. You can, and sometimes ought, to redress a wrong done to your good name, but be very slow even then to attribute malice. If Jesus could find an excuse for the Jews, "they know not what they do," it ought not be hard for us to excuse the little unkindness of our neighbors. And in so doing we shall generally be right. "Kind thoughts," says Faber, "are usually true thoughts." Even "they know not what they do" was true of most of the Jews. "Had they known," says St. Paul, "they would never have crucified the Lord of Glory" (1 Cor. ii, 8). Whereas unkind thoughts, being untrue, are the raw materials of rash judgments and calumny, kind thoughts, even if occasionally wrong, do harm to nobody. Our precious dignity, or "proper pride," as people call it, would probably pity itself—well let it! If it would only hang itself it would merely rid us of the nuisance of keeping it up. And by our refusing to take offense malicious neighbors would be positively benefited. If there was a spark of goodness left in him he would humbly take your mercy and be blessed thereby. It blesses him that takes. You would "gain your brother." But even if he did not take it you would not lose the reward of your kindness, and at the least he would be taught a good lesson.

Whene'r I spoke
Sarcastic joke
 Replete with malice spiteful,
These people mild,
They only smiled,
 And voted me delightful.
Now when a wight
Sits up all night,
 Ill-natured jokes devising,
And all his wiles,
Are met with smiles,
 It's hard—there's no disguising.

You see it is the spiteful man "King Gama" only that suffers from this kindness. If then taking offence never does good and generally does harm, and *not* taking offence never does harm and generally does good, the resolution never to take offence can surely be urged upon you. Practise it at home in your daily life, and when big occasions arise, your mercy will be strong enough to conquer them. Thus will you "learn of Jesus to be meek and humble of heart." You will win the mercy promised to the merciful. You will be practising the precepts and earning the reward of your Saviour. "Judge not and you shall not be judged; condemn not and you shall not be condemned; forgive and you shall be forgiven" (Luke vi, 37).

XI. PRAYER

"And going out, He went according to His custom to the Mount of Olives. And His disciples followed Him. And when He was come to the place He said to them: 'Pray, lest ye enter into temptation.' And He was withdrawn away from them a stone's cast, and kneeling down He prayed."—Luke xxiii, 40.

SYNOPSIS.—(1) *Jesus of word and example urges upon us the necessity of prayer.*

(2) *St. Alphonsus' word considered:*

(a) "Unless you pray you will be lost." Why? Because our enemies are too powerful. The devil, world and the flesh are stronger than our natural power can hope to conquer. But Jesus has conquered these enemies and will help us. Therefore:

(b) "If you pray you will most certainly be saved," i. e., if we pray with confidence. Dangers to confidence considered:

(1) *Our past sins.*

(2) *Pride.*

(3) *Want of courage to persevere in spite of obstacles. Moses in Old Law and Canaanitish women in New are examples of perseverance.*

(4) *Want of earnestness in daily prayer.*

By word and by example our Lord throughout His life is ever insisting upon the necessity of prayer. "Watch ye, therefore, praying at all times" (Luke xxi, 36). And he spoke also a parable to them that we ought always to pray and not to faint (Luke xviii, 1). In a special manner He taught His disciples to pray, inspiring them first with a great desire for this knowledge, "Lord, teach us to pray" (Luke xi, 1). He warns them against the pride and vain glory of the prayer of the Pharisees and gives them the "Our Father" as the model of their prayers (Matt. vi, 6 sqq). Such are His words.

But more remarkable still is His example. He was God and needed not prayer for His own sake. He prays to give us an example. "And rising very early, going out, He went into a desert place and there He prayed" (Mark i, 35): "He went up into a mount alone to pray" (Matt. xii, 23). "And He passed the whole night in the prayer of God" (Luke vi, 12). And in the text we have both word and example. It was to be His last word and His last example before He suffered. He knew how afterwards they would remember it. It would be burnt into their minds how, through neglect of His warning, they had turned traitors and abandoned Him in his cruel need—"Pray lest ye enter into temptation"—and being withdrawn away from them a stone's cast, kneeling down He prayed. Alas! word and example failed to arouse them, then; but the subsequent disasters of that dreadful night must have imprinted in letters of fire on their minds and hearts for ever those gentle words of Christ—"Watch and pray lest ye enter into temptation." They saw what they were without prayer. The iron had entered their souls. They were weak, they were cowards. They could do nothing. What utter need had they—they who, being what they were, had been chosen by Christ to be Apostles—to carry His name before kings and emperors and nations to the uttermost bounds of the earth—what need had they, I say, to be endued with strength from on high by the Holy Ghost? And so, with that humble and earnest prayer they prepared themselves for His coming. St. Paul is joined to their ranks because as God told Ananias who hesitated to receive Him, "Behold, he prayeth" (Acts ix, 11). Cornelius the Centurion is the first gentile convert, and amongst other things that merited for him this singular favor is especially mentioned that "He was always praying to God" (Acts x, 2). Understand it well, then, if we are ever to be in heaven with Jesus, Mary and Joseph—

with the Apostles, with the saints of the early Church as of all times, then, like them, we must become men and women of prayer. Go up in spirit to that region of the blessed and ask the greatest or the least amongst them how they won their crown—the answer will be ever the same—“He that is mighty hath done great things for me—I am here because I prayed.” Or go down in spirit to the dread prison house where God’s hand is heavy on his children, ask what brought those souls there, and they will tell you, “We are lost and for all eternity in hell because we did not pray.” “If you pray you will be saved,” says St. Alphonsus. “If you do not pray you will be lost.” There is the grand conclusion to which this great saint—this untiring missionary and founder of a missionary order—this deep-read theologian and holy doctor of the Church of God would lead us all. Raised up by God in these latter days to stem the rising tide of infidelity and moral corruption which threatens destruction to all that here is fair and breathes of heaven, he takes as his chief instrument the doctrine of the necessity of prayer. On it he bases the teaching of his dogmatic and ascetic theology—it is the constant recurring theme of his sermons and meditations. It is the subject of his most anxious instructions to his missionaries. By it he warns souls of exalted piety not to think they stand of their own power; but to take heed lest they fall; and by it he holds out hope to the most abandoned that as long as they pray they need never despair. “If you pray you will be saved, if you do not pray you will be lost.” “Give me to drink,” says our Lord to the woman at the well. He asks a little thing of us: something we can give with scarce an effort—but something he deigns to desire—to thirst for—and He promises us Eternal Life in exchange. “Pray and you will be saved.” But that little thing we must give, the little act we must do, that little prayer we must say—for God’s grace seeks

at least a "willing mind." "He who made you without yourself," says the great Augustine, "will not save you without yourself." If you pray, then, you will be saved, if you do not pray you will be lost.

It seems to me that we could not do better than take this Great Apostle of prayer, St. Alphonsus, as our guide in this meditation, and consider together the meaning of this saying of his.

How can it be, let me begin by asking, that prayer is so absolutely necessary? Is it strictly true to say that without prayer we shall most certainly be lost? Let us examine this statement. "Man's life," says holy Job, "is a warfare" (Job vii, 1). We are in a state of war then. Our wrestling indeed is "not against flesh and blood, enemies we can see—but against principalities and powers of darkness" (Eph. vi, 12), which we cannot see, and therefore which are harder to determine. And here at once is a serious danger. In our own day have been fought very dreadful wars which are all within our memory. It is easy to recall that though they differ widely in other respects they have this in common, that in each case disasters (sometimes irretrievable disaster) overtook the greater nation, for the one reason that the stronger nation made too light of the powers of its adversary. Now let us be warned, therefore, not to underrate our spiritual foes that would lead us straight to disaster not merely irreparable in this world but even eternally so hereafter.

Now, who are our enemies? We range ourselves, at Baptism, under the standard of Christ. We become His soldiers; and we promise to fight against the devil, the world and the flesh. These three are our enemies; then let us take care not to make light of them.

In the first place, there is the devil, then. At one time one of

God's bright angels, he was endowed with many mighty powers of intelligence and will—adorned with such attributes, arrayed with such majesty, clothed with such beauty and resplendent with such glory that, even in the presence of God Himself, a third of the mighty host of heaven took him for their leader and refused obedience to their eternal Lord. It is true that he was overthrown—"I saw Satan like lightning fall from heaven" (Luke x, 18), said Christ. And in that ruin he lost his external glory and magnificence. But let us remember "the gifts of God are without repentance" and he still retains in hell the mighty powers and attributes of mind and will he once possessed as Lucifer in heaven. But, unable now to fight in open warfare against his God, he directs all his powers to the ruin of God's creatures. And your souls especially are the object of his envious and relentless hatred. He hates you as he hates God Himself—for you are the children of God. He hates you as he hates the precious Blood of Jesus—for you are the purchase of that precious Blood, and through it are heirs to those thrones from which he and his rebel host were cast. St. Peter compares his fierce hatred to that of the hungry lion—"He goeth about," he tells us, "like a roaring lion seeking whom he may devour" (1 Pet. v, 8). Had he his way he would tear and rend you as the fiercest of the beasts tears and rends its prey. Moreover to the power and ferocity of the lion he unites the cunning of the serpent. He deceived our first parents, and since the fall throughout all the ages he has never been idle. He knows the heart of man as none other save God can know it. He knows you far better than you know yourself. He knows the temptations you can conquer and the one that is too strong for you. He may use your strength against yourself. The weak temptation you overcome he will use as an incentive to trust to your own strength. Then when you think yourself to

stand will come the temptation that he knows will lure you to your fall.

His power over us is helped by a circumstance peculiar to our times of unbelief. Father Faber reckons it as the great victory of the devil that he has somehow managed to make himself popular. Men have turned from God, and now seek comfort from the devil. In their troubles about the future; in their anxiety over a present crisis, they now pray no longer to their Father in heaven, but, by spiritualists, fortune-tellers, clairvoyants, they eagerly try to seek the information they desire from the devil. Oh, blind fools, if they did but know how bitterly he hates them. Let us not be deceived. Have you nothing to do or to say with this, one of the worst of all dangers. It is literally playing with hell fire. There is a saying, "Give the devil his due." Well, I say it, too. Give him his due—"Hate him." That's his due, for never can your hatred of him equal his for you. It is because men have lost that healthy hatred of him that our fathers had; because they look upon the devil now more or less as a joke, that his power is growing so appalling amongst us. You must fear him. You must convince yourself that of yourself you are absolutely powerless against him. His power, his strength, his cunning, his relentless hatred give him simple and absolute mastery over you. But now the devil works not alone. He makes use of the world to help him. He appeals to our concupiscences through the sights and sounds that meet us on every side. "The world is too much with us." All day long, our eyes, our ears, our imaginations are assailed with impressions which, if not positively wicked, can by the devil's cunning be made a temptation to wickedness, and the memory of them lingers with us even when the incidents have passed away. Men and women, too, there are who willingly cooperate with the evil

one to ruin the souls of others. Monsters in very truth, more diabolical than human, who do satan's evil work more effectually than he could do it himself. They seem possessed with a loathing and hatred for all that is pure and innocent, and never are more happy than when engaged in dragging down other souls to the depths of their own depravity.

Such is the great evil that is understood by "the world." Its danger lies not in this or that particular temptation—disastrous as at times such particular temptation may unfortunately prove—but in its general atmosphere it is poisonous, and our corrupt nature makes us peculiarly liable to its infection. We have considered this already, and I have spoken to little purpose if I have not convinced you that the concupiscence of the eyes and the concupiscence of the flesh and the pride of life make the world for us a danger too great for our feeble nature left to itself to struggle successfully against.

And lastly, there is the flesh—I understand by this our lower appetites and animals instincts which create within us such heavy inertia for good and such a terrible propensity to evil that our will seems utterly unable to resist. Our merciful Saviour in all things like ourselves, sin only excepted, feels compassion for us. "The spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak" (Matt. xxvi, 41). And in the keenness of his sympathy St. Paul—all things to all men—seems to experience the struggle in his own person: "For to will is present with me, but to accomplish that which is good I find not—I see another law in my members fighting against the law of mind and captivating me in the law of sin. Unhappy man that I am, who shall deliver me from the body of this death? The grace of God by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom. vii, 18, sqq). For our instruction is the great Apostle inspired to depict with striking vividness this terrible danger and at the same time to show us our remedy.

Here I want only to say that that remedy does not lie in our own power. As "against the devil" and the world, so also against the flesh, left to our own resources, we can but struggle in vain.

Surely then, my dear children, the conclusion is obvious if each of our three great enemies taken in turn is thus shown to be too powerful for us, what possible chance have we against them in combination leagued together to destroy us? No good can come from underrating their power. Our one chance of safety lies in humbly admitting that we can do nothing against them. This is the attitude our Lord desires to see in us. If, then, our own reason and experience do not convince us, let us recall our Lord's words. It was on the night of His betrayal He uttered them. He and His disciples had risen from the Supper-table and (as mentioned in the text) were making their way to the Mount of Olives when our Lord pointed out to them a dead branch of a vine that lay on the roadside. "As the branch," He said, "cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abide in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me—for without Me you can do nothing" (John xv, 4). *Nothing*, that is what our Lord would have us feel and intimately realize, "that without Him we can do nothing." For then only shall we ask for His help as we ought when we have convinced ourselves that on that help depends, in literal truth, our very salvation. "Unless you pray you will most certainly be lost."

And now we go on to consider the second and more encouraging point. If you pray you will most certainly be saved. Of that St. Paul has already assured us. "Who will deliver me?" we have heard him cry. And we have heard, too, his confident answer, "The grace of God by our Lord Jesus Christ." Our Lord's word does not discourage him—"without Me you can do nothing." No; he draws the lesson Jesus would have us all draw—"With Him I

can do all things" (Phil. iv, 13). For Jesus does not want to cast us down, but to show to us clearly where our strength lies, that we might secure the victory. To feel that, is to understand what the old man whom we thought of in the beginning meant when he said, "Jesus looks at me." So far we have looked at Jesus. We have seen Him as our leader in this warfare. He puts *Satan* to flight when the evil one dares to tempt Him. "Begone, Satan," we have heard Him say, "the Lord thy God shalt thou adore and him only shalt thou serve." He conquers the *world*. "Have confidence," He says to his followers, "I have overcome the world." He subdued the *flesh*—"God sending His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh hath condemned sin in the flesh" (Rom. viii, 3). And when we have thus considered Him—"when we have sanctified the Lord Jesus in our hearts," the Apostle bids, "be ye armed with the power of His might" (Eph. vi, 19). Oh, wonderful words of the great Apostle. Well might he cry, "I can do all things," for he realized that God had, in giving us Jesus, given us with Him the Power of His infinite might. In a perfect ecstasy of courage he exclaims, "If God be for us, who shall be against us." "He that spared not His own Son but delivered Him up for us all—how hath He not also with Him given us all things?" (Rom. viii, 21 sqq.). Thus Jesus is given to us not as our Leader only, but as our Helper, too. We have looked on Him and seen Him as our Leader, and now He looks at us; He sees our need of His help, and shows Himself not merely willing but anxious to give us that help. But we must ask Him for it. "Ask and you shall receive"—which means, says St. Teresa, "that unless we ask we shall not receive." *If you pray you will be saved*. There is the one condition, but it is an essentially necessary one.

Now I want to convince you of this. If I can only make you

pray as you ought, I should feel quite sure that by the grace of God this retreat had put you on the sure road to heaven. Well—how ought we to pray?

The great quality that Jesus asks for in our prayers is Confidence. And the fault that St. James finds in those who are not heard because they pray amiss is the want of confidence.

So let us see how we are to pray with confidence. In the first place the fact that we are sinners need not make us fearful of not being heard. It is true that the man whom Jesus cured of his blindness declared to the Pharisees, "God does not hear sinners." But it is true only of those who actually in their prayers have no real intention of giving up sin or of turning sincerely to God. Of such Jesus says, "They shall cry to Me but I will not hear them: they shall seek Me but they shall die in their sins" (John viii, 21). But in the Holy Scriptures there is nothing so clear as this, that REPENTANT sinners will be heard and lovingly welcomed back by God to His grace and favor again. "As I live," says the Lord God, "I desire not the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live" (Ezek. xxxiii, 11). You see, to impress us with His eagerness to pardon, God takes an oath by His very existence (and God though He is, He could take no greater oath) that He does not wish to condemn. No—if we are sorry for our sins we must have the greatest confidence that God will be merciful to us. "Come to Me you that labor and are burdened and I will refresh you" (Matt. xi, 28). "You shall pray to Me and I will hear you: you shall seek Me and you shall find Me when you shall seek Me *with all your heart*" (Jer. xxix, 13). If we are sincere with God then we shall seek Him with the confidence that wins His grace and pardon.

But let us make up our minds that our confidence must rest

simply on the goodness and promises of God and not on any merits of our own. That would be simply fatal to the efficacy of our prayers. "To some who trusted to themselves and despised others," St. Luke tells us, Jesus spoke the parable of the Pharisee and the publican. Because it is Jesus who utters it we should treasure this parable as the revelation to us of how hateful to God is pride and self-sufficiency. For, in spite of many good deeds, in spite of much external religiousness, in spite of fasting and alms-giving, the Pharisee is rejected. It was pride that ruined him. He had confidence indeed, but confidence in himself. Such confidence that emboldened him to stand in the very presence of God and give thanks that he was not as the rest of men. But the poor publican had no confidence in himself, he would not so much as lift up his eyes towards heaven, but struck his breast saying, "O God! be merciful to me a sinner." And we have the word of God-made Man for it that "he went down to his house justified rather than the other" (Luke xviii, 9 sqq).

Pride, then, ruins confidence and spoils prayer, whereas humility enables us to cast all our care on Him who hath care of us. "The prayer of him that humbleth himself shall pierce the clouds"; and "he will not depart till the Most High behold" (Eccl. xxxv, 21). Our confidence must, first of all then, be humble. Next it must be firm. "A firmness which shows itself in an urgent persistency. There are many examples in Holy Scripture which show that this holy boldness that simply won't take 'no' for an answer but still persistently trusts in the mercy of God, seems all powerful with the goodness and kindness of God our Saviour." In the book of Exodus, for instance, we read (xxxii, 7 sqq.) how God's anger was kindled against his people when they worshipped the golden calf. Moses was with Him in the mount receiving His

commandments, and God said to him, "Go, get thee down, thy people hath sinned." But Moses continued to pray. And God, to prove to us the value of this persisting confidence, deigns to appear as if He were struggling with the power of His servant's prayer. "See that this people is stiff-necked," He cries—and then—most wonderfully: "Let Me alone—that I may destroy them." And when even then Moses does not cease to pray, but continues begging for mercy, we read that "the Lord was appeased from doing the evil which He had spoken against His people." As if he could not resist the entire confidence that Moses showed in His mercy, "God is overcome," says St. John Chrisostom on this passage, "by the omnipotence of prayer."

A more striking instance I could not hope to find for you—but in the life of our Lord there is an example of this holy persistency of confidence which may bring it home more clearly to us. Here is St. Matthew's account (xv, 22): "A woman of Canaan crying out, said to Him, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David—my daughter is grievously troubled by a devil. Who answered her not a word. And His disciples came and besought Him, saying: 'Send her away, for she crieth after us.' And He, answering, said: 'I was not sent but to the sheep that are lost of the house of Israel.' But she came and adored Him, saying: 'Lord, help me.' Who answering, said: 'It is not good to take the bread of the children and to cast it to the dogs.' But she said: 'Yea, Lord, for the whelps also eat of the crumbs that fall from the table of their masters.' Then Jesus, answering, said to her: 'O woman, great is thy faith, be it done to thee as thou wilt'; and her daughter was cured from that hour." Our hearts must be stone cold if they do not beat with gratitude to Jesus for this wonderful instance of the power of prayer. Everything apparently is against the poor woman. The disciples lose

their temper with her and try to drive her off; Jesus is perfectly cold and indifferent. When she persists, so unlike Himself He is even rough with her. He cannot work miracles for pagans—the bread is for the children, not for dogs. That He should have said that is a convincing proof of the value he sets on persistent confidence. It cost Him more to utter it, you may be sure, than it hurt her to hear it. And then when, in spite of it all, she still persists, He allows Himself to appear as if carried out of Himself with admiration.

“Oh, woman!” He cries in utter astonishment, “great is thy faith!” And at once He gives her all she asks for.

It is God’s loving Providence over us that allows our confidence in Him to be at times thus severely tried. Taken as this good woman takes them, such trials but tighten our hold on the strong hand of Jesus and give us courage in the fight. And we need this courage in our life-long fight for heaven. “When thou enterest the service of God, prepare thy soul for tribulation” (Eccl. ii, 1). Of St. Paul God distinctly said, “I will show him how great things he must suffer for my name’s sake” (Acts ix, 16). And St. Paul was equal to the trial. “I am appointed a preacher and an apostle and a teacher,” he says. “For which cause I also suffer these things: but I am not ashamed, for I know whom I have believed” (2 Tim. i, 12). Trials, rebuffs and disappointments, then, should not rob us of our confidence. We should rather regard them as opportunities allowed us by God for increasing it—and urging us to pray more fervently. When a nun complained to Mother Margaret that her pain was so great that she was tempted to think there was no use praying, that God had abandoned her, the beautiful answer she received was this: “How near must Jesus be to you when you can feel the pricking of the crown of thorns.” The cloud

of sorrow you so bitterly resent may be the very means God makes use of to hide His nearer approach to your soul.

“Halts by me that footfall—

Is my gloom, after all,

Shade of His hand outstretched caressingly?

Ah! fondest, blindest, weakest,

I am He whom thou seekest.

Thou dravest love from thee—who dravest me.”—(Thompson.)

Nor, lastly, should the routine of our daily prayers cause our confidence to slacken. It is the danger that threatens our daily prayers that they should become mechanical. Do be warned against it. Once prayer becomes merely mechanical it is easily dropped altogether, perhaps never to be resumed again. Behold the beginning of nearly every spiritual ruin. Put your heart in your prayers. Remember prayer is the *raising of the mind and heart to God*—that and nothing else. You may read or recite beautiful words to God all day long, but unless your mind has been thinking of God, and your heart has been loving God, whatever else you may have done you certainly have not been praying. You need your daily prayers for your daily conflict. The devil, the world and the flesh do not grow slack. Without God's help you are sure to fall. That help He gives you daily when you ask Him for it daily in the prayer He has taught you—*Give us this day our daily bread*. And with that help you can conquer, for “with Him you can do all things.”

There, then, is a safe way to heaven—if you pray you will be saved. Make it the great resolution of your retreat, to be faithful to your daily prayers. Not long or wearisome prayers, but prayers

that are fervent, humble, confident and persevering. It is precisely of Faithfulness in these things that God will say to you in the end, "Well done, good and faithful servant. Because thou hast been *faithful over a few things*, I will place thee over many things, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord" (Matt. xxv, 23).

XII. HOLY COMMUNION

"He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me."—John vi, 58.

SYNOPSIS.—To fulfil the purpose of our creation, we must aim at being Christ-like, not in externals but in the spirit. We need the help of heaven to accomplish this, and this help is especially given us in Holy Communion. The obstacles to our becoming a child of God classed under four heads: Sin, Selfishness, Depression, and Discouragement.

Jesus, from His Tabernacle, looks at us, and, seeing our need, gives us grace—as we have considered—in answer to prayer. For that grace we can never be sufficiently thankful. On it our salvation depends; for whilst without it we can do nothing, with it we can do all things. Praise and thanks are due to God, then, for this wondrous gift of grace: but an even greater gift now claims our gratitude, viz.:

And that a higher gift than grace
Should flesh and blood refine:
God's presence and His very Self,
And essence all Divine.

—Newman.

Yes, He sees in our weak and fallen nature our utter need of the "Bread that is the food of the strong." He Himself has declared it. "Unless you eat the Flesh of the Son of Man and drink His Blood, you shall not have life in you" (St. John vi). Christ is the true Life of the soul. "I live now, not I, but Christ liveth in Me," must in due measure be the cry of every soul that is not to perish. A Christian who is not even aiming at that may truly be said "to have received his soul in vain," and in view of his baptismal promises "to have sworn deceitfully to his neighbor" (Ps. 23). He belongs to that drifting, helpless "generation that sets not their heart aright, whose spirit is not faithful to God" (Ps. 77).

To fulfil the purpose of our creation, to make good the promises of our baptism, we must aim at being Christ-like. No half measures will do. To compromise is to attempt what Christ has said is impossible—the serving of God and Mammon: “For he that is not with Me is against Me.” Our aim must be nothing less than to be animated by the Spirit of Christ, and for this Christ gives Himself to us in the blessed Eucharist. “He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me” (John vi). Our chance of heaven is secure in proportion as we earnestly make use of this power to imitate Christ, who declared Himself for us all—the Way, the Truth, and the Life (John xiv, 6). Now, what do we mean when we speak about the imitation of Christ? It is really to be very much regretted that piety does not seem always to include in its wide embrace of many most excellent gifts and virtues—a saving sense of humor. Through the want of it men and women of highest sanctity, of the straightest morality, of the most unbending regularity, occasionally afford by their conduct food for much reprehensible hilarity on the part of the more profane of their acquaintance—to talk platitudes.

In stained glass attitudes, as the song has it, seems to be their idea of imitating Christ and His saints. They aim at the externals—the manner, the pose, the expressions—which they suppose to have been characteristic of their models, and are satisfied if they succeed in reproducing them. Whereas if Burns’s prayer could be heard in their behalf:

O, wad the Power the giftie gie us
To see ourselves as ithers see us!

they would understand at once that their success was but a joy to the frivolous. God does not want that—God regards the heart. That is why he rejected the Jews. “These people honor Me with their lips, but their hearts are far from Me.” “The kingdom of

God," He tells them, "is within you." And we must see that interior kingdom "first, last, and all through." "Seek ye first the kingdom of God and His Justice, and all those things shall be added unto you." Our work is to watch and pray that God's kingdom may come into our hearts, and then the outward bearing, the manner, or even the mannerisms of Christ's saints may be added if God sees it to be expedient. Aim at acquiring the spirit, and let that spirit find, later on, by God's guidance, its true expression. "They want to begin with the feet," said poor St. Francis de Sales, bothered by the persistent petition of his nuns to be discalced, "and I want to begin with the head."

The answer to our question, then, is that to imitate Christ: to become Christ-like, means *not* to adopt what we suppose to have been the external bearing or manner of Christ, but to acquire the Spirit of Christ. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of Him" (Rom. viii, 9). We must strive to acquire it. And in what does it precisely consist? Of that we have an explicit pronouncement of St. Paul: "And because you are sons, God hath sent the Spirit of His Son into your heart, crying Abba, Father" (Gal. iv, 6). That is the Spirit of Christ, the reasoned conviction that, being the children of God, we must look up and lift up our hearts, crying, "Our Father, who art in Heaven." That our lives must be so fashioned as to give proof that "we reckon we have not here a lasting city, but we look for one that is to come, and that men, seeing our good work, may glorify our Father who is in Heaven. That is our work, as it was the work of Christ. That is why we are placed in this world—to give testimony to the great truth of the Paternity of God. "For this was I born," says Christ, "for this came I into the world, that I might give testimony of the truth" (John xviii, 37).

We come then to two conclusions: First, that it is necessary for us to imitate Christ; and, second, that that imitation consists in acquiring the Spirit of Christ, the Spirit, that is, of a child of God. Unless you become as children you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.

Now, though it may seem easy enough when we hear it put to us pleasantly to be a child of God, we shall find it a work of great difficulty to carry out in practise. We were made to love God, it is true, and "our hearts can never rest till they rest in Him." Nevertheless our nature is fallen and the concupiscence of the eye, the concupiscence of the flesh and the pride of life, find much in the world to satisfy them, much that they would willingly cling to. It is only by a sustained effort that we can think of God and love God, and for that effort itself we need help. To live as a child of God is then a necessary ideal of a Christian, but it is an ideal that is really beyond us.

Ah! but a man's reach should exceed his grasp,
Or what's Heaven for?

—*Browning.*

We need the help of heaven. And my point is that in Holy Communion heaven gives us that help. Nearly all spiritual failures come from not realizing that when a man makes an effort to live as a child of God. He succeeds for a time, then he fails. He tries again, and fails again. As long as he remains persuaded that he can succeed by his own efforts he bravely perseveres. But repeated failures cannot but tell on his resolution. Slowly but surely the conviction gathers that it is too much for him and that it is useless trying. Then, alas! he settles down to a lower level and drifts into a spiritual listlessness; or, if the passions be strong, into a life of reckless sinfulness. The root of the trouble is that he does not recognize where the strength really lies. If we could only persuade

ourselves once for all that there *is* power in Holy Communion, then would our lackadaisical desires take their courage in both hands and set out securely for victory. "To them that received Him, to them He gave power to become the children of God" (St. John i). If this is true of those who receive Him in faith, *a fortiori* is it true of those who receive Him in Holy Communion. I want most earnestly to persuade you of this. You will never strive as you ought to be a child of God unless you feel sure it can be done; and you will not feel sure it can be done unless you are convinced that the devout reception of Holy Communion will do it for you. Nothing, then, can be of greater service to your soul than this conviction. Let us face the situation then quite frankly together. We can acknowledge fully the difficulties, once we are persuaded that they can be overcome.

Well, then, what are the difficulties? It is hard to fix them into watertight compartments, since they are all so closely united to one another, but that we might get the full measure of their worth, let us class them under the four heads of Sin, Selfishness, Depression, and Discouragement. Those are the obstacles to our becoming children of God; and Holy Communion is, I say, the remedy. In Holy Communion we receive the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Christ, and to receive it with true desire is to receive "power to become a child of God."

I. Well, then, let us go thoroughly into the matter. I have put down the first obstacle as Sin. Actual present sin "divides between us and our God," and whilst that is on the soul there can, of course, be no question of being a child of God. That is obvious. And though the Council of Trent speaks of the Holy Communion as the great remedy against sin, both venial and mortal, yet it is not precisely about that aspect of Holy Communion that I wish to speak

here, but rather about its remedy for the maladies inflicted by sin. Scripture bids us: "Be not without fear for sin forgiven." To avoid silly scruples, let us note carefully the word "*forgiven*." We are not warned to have fear about the forgiveness itself of the sin. Of that, once we have done our best in Confession, we should have no fear. Forgiveness in that case is no longer even a matter of Hope—it is a matter of Faith. "*I believe* in the forgiveness of sin." But the point is that sin, even though forgiven, sometimes leaves its evil effects upon the soul, like some diseases, which, even though they be cured, leave traces of their ravages behind them. It is against these maladies, maladies caused by sins that have been fully *forgiven*, that we are here warned to be on our guard.

That is the evil. That is the first of the obstacles that prevent our resolutely striving to be children of God. Once a man has sinned he can never be exactly as though he had never sinned. It is true, hearty and sincere repentance can not only cleanse the soul from guilt, but, by his humility, the sinner may make himself dearer to God than he was before his fall. Nevertheless, by actual sin, concupiscence, which saints and sinners have alike, has, in his particular case, been strengthened enormously, and a fall becomes increasingly dangerously easy for him.

There is his spiritual malady. He may have struggled long and arduously against that tendency; he may have taken most stringent measures; he may have buoyed up his courage with the fiercest resolutions. All has been vain, let us suppose; the malady has but increased, and he is worn out with the struggle. It seems a mockery that he should strive any longer to be a child of God. It is a desperate malady then. Now that of the remedy. In the days of His flesh Jesus once passed through the crowd, when a woman troubled with a malady said within herself, "If I can but touch the

hem of His garment, I shall be healed." And Jesus, turning and seeing her, said: "Be of good heart, daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole." And the woman was made whole from that hour (Matt. ix, 20). For twelve years she had labored under that infirmity, and after spending all her substance upon physicians found herself at the end of that time rather the worse, as St. Mark assures us. Yet the passing of Jesus gives her confidence. "If I can but touch the hem of His garment, I shall be healed." And in that confidence she is healed. "Be of good heart, daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole."

Now we see our remedy. What Jesus did for the body is typical of what He desires to do for the soul. It is the same living Jesus comes to us in Holy Communion. He not merely passes near us, but He enters into our heart and dwells there. We can not merely kiss the hem of His garment but can entertain Him in our very soul. How is it we are not healed? The arm of the Lord is not shortened. His wish to heal us has not diminished. No, the fault lies with us. We do not wish to be healed. We are afraid of being taken at our word. So we do not speak to Him from our heart. Oh, surely, if you did, what happened to that woman would happen spiritually to you. And Jesus, seeing your confidence and courage, would say to you too: "Be of good heart, daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole."

II. Selfishness is the shadow of sin. It ever follows it. In its last analysis sin is preferring self to God: I will not serve, but will myself be as God, knowing good and evil, and deciding right and wrong in my own way. It is its very contradictory, the spirit of cheerful self-surrender which must ever be characteristic of the true child of God. "What wilt thou have me to do?" is all the generous soul seeks to know. Whereas the selfish soul seeks to

know not what God wills, but grudgingly what it can do or avoid doing without being punished. "No, you shall not surely die," was an appeal to Eve's selfishness, and it succeeded. Eve ceased to be a child of God when she ceased to fear and reverence His will, and yielded to the temptation to think only of her own safety. That is the evil—self-seeking. And what is the remedy? We receive it when we receive in Holy Communion the Spirit of the Blood of Christ. There is essentially the spirit of generosity. It was poured out; it was sacrificed; it was delivered until there was not one drop of it left in that torn and lifeless body. "There came forth blood mingled with water" when the spear opened His sacred side, to show us He had not one drop of blood left to shed for us—that's generosity. *One* drop was enough to save a million worlds, and He shed *every* drop for each individual soul. "He loved me and delivered Himself for me."

To a soul that desires to be a generous child of God, then, the means is open: Receive the Blood of Christ and with it the spirit of generosity. The devil has no power with a truly generous soul. The devil's power lies in his reasoning with us. Eve, as we have seen, listened to him and fell. But the soul that has drunk in the Spirit of the Precious Blood is too generous to dally with a temptation that might involve her loyalty to the heavenly Father.

Oh! to be sprinkled from the wells
Of Christ's own Precious Blood excels
Earth's best and highest bliss.
The ministers of wrath divine
Hurt not the happy hearts that shine
With those red drops of His.

—Faber.

III. When our Lord's body lay dead upon the Cross, His soul we believe descended into that part of hell called Limbo. There the saints of the Old Law were awaiting His coming with eager

longing. They were not in torment; but their happiness could not be complete while they were denied the joy of the Beatific Vision, and suddenly their prison house is inundated with the splendors of the glorious and triumphant soul of Jesus and their beings are thrilled with joy unutterable as He descends among them. "This day has salvation come into the house," so it was said to Zachaeus, so it could have been said to the saints in Limbo, so it can be said to each soul that receives its Lord devoutly in Holy Communion. "Oh, Father, he gave me joy," was the only account the grateful Tobias could at first give of the angel's visit. But in Holy Communion we receive the Lord of Angels, the source ever of their happiness. Let us understand our privilege that we may use it. God can give us *happiness*. "I am thy reward exceeding great." But we must *seek* it. "The Lord is food to the soul that *seeketh* Him." "Therefore we must *taste* and see how sweet is the Lord." That is, we must desire to find our happiness in God, otherwise we shall not find it.

Let us understand this well. Happiness of some sort we must have. We can no more help desiring to be happy than we can help existing. They go together. Puritanism, which made happiness sinful, failed, because it was an unnatural religion. But now if we give up the happiness which the world offers to those who gratify their passion or their pride, we must seek it in God, for there is nowhere else to seek it. Souls who give up the worldly pleasures and yet will not seek their happiness in God, make themselves miserable and get religion into bad odor. "When you fast," says our blessed Lord, "be not of the hypocritic *sad*. For they disfigure their faces that they may appear to men to fast. Amen, I say to you, they have received their reward. But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head and wash thy face, that thou appear

not to men to fast, but to thy Father, who is in secret, and thy Father who seeth a secret will repay thee" (Matt. vi, 16).

There is the secret of the saints: They were as little elated with the praise of the world as they were cast down by its censure. But they did care for the praise of God. That they really *sought*. And though they sought it in secret, they really found it and understood by experience that God was their reward exceeding great. Let us follow their example, for in this we can easily do so. It is the devil's way when he cannot make a soul give up the service of God to try to make that soul unhappy in God's service. Well, now don't let him succeed in doing so with you. Learn of the saints to seek happiness in God, and remember that when you receive your Saviour in Holy Communion you receive the Source of all the joy and happiness and can have that happiness for the asking.

It is worth while for your own sake. It is worth while for the sake of your neighbors. Just as people are frozen off by a frigid severity or a vinegary austerity, so they can be won by the sunny brightness of the true children of God. That is how the saints have succeeded. That is how the faith of the early Christians was such a glorious triumph. They had many more hardships to suffer than we have, but the thought that God was with them made them rejoice to suffer for His sake. They knew nothing of that sourness which some people mistake for religion nowadays, but they served God in happiness and learned of the Apostles to rejoice in the Lord always. Here is that great Apostle's own account of them: "As dying, and behold we live; as chastised, and not killed; as sorrowful, yet always rejoicing; as needy, yet enriching many; as having nothing and possessing all things. . . . For you are the temple of the living God, as God saith: "I will dwell in them and be their God; and they shall be My people" (2. Cor. vi, 9),

Have we not this same reason for happiness as they had, and does not God make good this same promise, too, in our behalf whenever we receive Him in Holy Communion? "I will dwell in them and be their God, and they shall be My people."

But up like fire he started: and as oft
As Gareth brought him grovelling on his knees
So many a time he vaulted up again—
Till Gareth panted hard: and his great heart
Foredooming all his trouble was in vain,
Labored within him, for he seemed as one
That all in later sadder life begins
To war against ill uses of a life,
But these from all his life arise and cry,
"Thou hast made us lords and canst not put us down."

In this description of Gareth's fight with the mysterious Grant at the ford, Tennyson thus depicts incidentally the dismay and helpless terror of the soul brought to bay by its passions and having to own their lordship over him. Of himself he cannot conquer. Up to till now buoyed by false hopes, he thought he had but really to will it: set his teeth and exert his powers, and victory was assured. Now he knows victory is impossible. It is a terrible moment, and unless the soul remembers it is not alone it may be a fatal moment. "But if Christ be with us, who shall be against us?" For what power can withstand the strength of the might of Him who is almighty? In Holy Communion we receive the *power of His Divinity*. Think of that. Had we gazed without faith on the Body of Christ as it lay buried in the Sepulchre we would have shrunk with horror from the sight. It was the body of One struck by God and afflicted, of the Victim of Sin, for the "Lord had laid on Him the iniquities of us, by whose stripes we were healed," of a worm and woman. And yet after three days that same Body—lifeless, torn, bruised and bloodless, is *raised* and clothed with such

transcendent glory, with such ravishing loveliness, that to gaze upon it will form one of the chief joys of Paradise for all eternity. He had gloriously kept His word: "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will build it up again." And how has He kept it? What power had wrought this wondrous change? What power could have done it save the Infinite Power of God's Divinity? And that same power is given to you in Holy Communion. No matter what the past has been, no matter what terrible havoc sin has wrought in your soul, you can rise to the glory of a child of God, if you but make use of the power that is freely given to you in Holy Communion. You have tried and failed, maybe, in your own power; rely on that strength no longer, but do not despair; do not for a moment be discouraged; arm yourself with the power of His Might, and all will be well with you. This is not my exhortation merely: it is the inspired exhortation of the great Apostle of the Gentiles, that we should model our rising from Him or His Resurrection from the dead and, relying on the power He will give us, resolve to persevere to the end in the life of grace that He has won for us.

"Knowing that Christ rising again from the dead, dieth now no more, death shall no more have dominion over Him. For in that He died to sin He died once, but in that He liveth He liveth unto God; *so do you also reckon* that you are dead to sin, but alive unto God, in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom. vi, 9). Thus will the Divinity of Christ enable us to overcome this last obstacle in the way of our becoming children of God. It differs from what we considered as the first obstacle, as effect differs from its cause. In the first we thought of the spiritual malady of sin it itself; in this last of the discouragement which the persistence of that malady induces in the soul of one who is striving to become a child of

God. But for both evils as well as for all others Holy Communion is the Divinely appointed remedy.

To sum up then: Holy Communion will help us to gain the grand and necessary object of all our spiritual striving, viz.: to become a child of God. But it is essential for us to be fully persuaded of this great truth, otherwise we shall not approach the altar with that longing desire which alone can securely obtain it for us. And so we have thought the matter over carefully together, and have seen how truly Holy Communion can help us to welcome all the obstacles that stand in the way of our attaining this object of our spiritual desires, for the Body of Christ cures the soul of its maladies; the Blood of Christ destroys its selfishness; the Soul of Christ dissipates its gloom and the Divinity of Christ arms it with invincible courage. If we really desire it, then here we find all we need to enable us to become and to persevere to the end of our life—a child of God. Here is the word fulfilled: “To them that received Him to them He gave power to become the children of God.” Here, finally, does He make good His promises of giving us His Spirit, the Spirit whereby we cry Abba, Father: “As the living Father hath sent Me, and as I live by the Father, so he that eateth Me the same also shall live of Me” (St. John vi, 58).

XIII. OUR LADY

SYNOPSIS.—*I. WOMAN BEHOLD THY SON. What it cost Jesus to make Mary the Mother of Sinners should convince us of His desire to give us a Spiritual Mother for our soul.*

II. BEHOLD THY MOTHER. Mary will assuredly hear the word of Jesus: but do we hear His word to us? The danger of coldness to Mary.

To avoid it we consider:

- I. HER GREATNESS. a) In the Immaculate Conception.
b) In the Divine Maternity.
c) In her constant intercourse with Jesus.
d) In her charge of the Infant Christ.
e) In her Assumption.
f) In her Triumph in Heaven.*
- 2. Her Faithfulness lies in her remembering that all are her children, and in praying for us.*

Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother. When Jesus, therefore, had seen his mother and that disciple standing whom he loved, he saith to his mother: Woman behold thy son. After that he saith to the disciple: Behold thy mother.—John 19, 25.

St. Luke tells us that when our Lord was once entering the city of Naim there met him a sad funeral procession. For a dead man was being carried out, the only son of his mother, and she was a widow and a great multitude of the city was with her (Luke vii, 11). We may imagine our Lord standing aside with His disciples out of respect for the dead to let that procession go by. And there would come first the friends and relations of the dead boy—then the simple bier on which was laid the body, and then all in tears the poor, weeping mother. The sight of her intense grief had moved a great multitude of that city to show their compassion for her. It was a sight that went straight to the Heart of Jesus. Without being asked, without requiring, as in His other miracles, an act of Faith

in His power, He determines to relieve her anguish. He leaves His disciples. He goes to her and, being moved with mercy towards her, He said to her, "Woman, weep not." It was as though the sight of her tears was more than He could bear—for never did there beat in human breast a heart more tender than the Sacred Heart of Jesus Christ. For a moment doubtless the woman would be astonished—perhaps indignant. Why should she not weep. Surely she had cause enough. There, before her, all that she loved or cared for most in this world lay dead upon that bier. Who was this stranger that would thus address her? But when looking up through her streaming tears her eyes met those of Jesus gazing down upon her with infinite tenderness and compassion, her feelings must have changed to awe and confidence as He leaves her, and she watches Him, Oh how wistfully, as He walks to those who are carrying the body and bids them stand. And then laying back the pall, she sees Him take her boy's hand in His, and with that voice with which He spake as one having power—which the devils hear and tremble—He cries, "Young man I say to thee arise." And he that was dead sat up and began to speak. And He gave him to his mother.

I want you to think of that scene. I want to convince you of the love of Jesus for those in sorrow! For we have not a High Priest who cannot have compassion on our infirmities (Heb. iv, 15). For now I want to remind you of another scene where He acts so differently. For there was a time when He saw a poor, weeping woman standing at the deathside of her only son—and she, too, was a widow and her son the fairest amongst the children of men, and He worked no miracle to relieve her. He saw her there witnessing the dread butchery whereby that Son was done to death with every species of cruelty and injustice, and yet He had no

word of comfort or sympathy for her. "There stood by the cross of Jesus His mother."

Now why was this? How was it that He who could not bear to see the tears of the widow of Naim could look on the heart of His mother pierced through and through with Simeon's sword and say no word of comfort to relieve her? Did He love her less than the widow of Naim? Did He, because she was His mother, think He might be indifferent to her grief? Oh, such thoughts are cruel blasphemies against our Lord. Never did a son love his mother as Jesus loved Mary. We must look elsewhere for an explanation of this mystery. For mystery indeed it is, or better, perhaps, one phase of that mystery of the infinite love of God for the souls of sinners that meets us at every turn when meditating on the ways of God with men. The explanation which pleases me most is that it is part of His Father's business, of the work of saving souls, which by His Father's will He had come on earth to do. Already it had cost Mary one of her great dolours, and now it is to cost her another.

At her knee and by her side in the home at Nazareth, and after in His public life, He had by His human experience learnt the value of the helpful tenderness and sympathetic pity of a mother's love. His compassion for sinners, His wish to do His Father's will and secure their salvation prompted the desire to provide them with such a love. In no human heart could such depths of love be found, as He knew well, as in that of His own dear mother. But how could she ever love sinners? Saints there have been like St. Stanislaus or St. Aloysius who have fainted at the presence of even venial sin. Their shrinking dread, their paralizing horror of sin could never have equaled that of Mary. They had fallen under the stain of at least original sin from which Mary had even been free.

How then could Mary the Immaculate not only not shrink from venial sin, but actually learn to love the greatest of grievous sinners with a mother's love? The answer is: "There stood by the Cross of Jesus His mother." There did she learn her lesson of loving sinners with a mother's love. Jesus' sufferings and death are the evidence of His love. Greater love than this no man hath that he lay down his life for his friends. And it was His will that Mary should stand by his Cross and witness His sufferings and death and learn from them His love. She was to be witness herself. The report of others could not convey the same impression. No, she was herself to count the wounds that the cruel scourge had made; to see the red blood drop unheeded on the hard rock; to hear the hammer fall, as blow by blow the long, rough nails were driven home and hand and foot secured to the wood of the tree of shame. She, with her own eyes, with her own ears, was to witness every incident of that long drawn agony of three bitter hours of the crucifixion. The pains that racked His bruised limbs and torn flesh with ceaseless agony from the nails, the crown of thorns, and the hard wood of the cross itself, the thirst occasioned by His loss of blood, the malignant triumph of His relentless foes, their blasphemies, their jeerings and their mockeries. And hardest of all for her to witness, the abandonment by His Heavenly Father. Without a murmur had He borne the insults of His enemies—when He was reviled He did not revile, when He suffered He threatened not, but delivered Himself to Him that judged Him unjustly (1 Pet. ii, 23). Nay, she had heard His prayer for them: "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." But to lose His Father's help seemed more than even His great Heart could endure. "My God, my God," he cried, "why hast Thou forsaken me?"

Thus, then, at the foot of the Cross did Mary witness what Jesus suffered for sinners. There was her tender soul pierced with the sword of Simeon. And there whilst she was actual witness to it all, whilst her Son's sufferings were being by her tender sympathy repeated in her own breaking heart, then it was, and not till then, that Jesus made her the mother of sinners. "Woman," he said to her, "behold thy son." Not St. John alone, but all for whom He was dying; "behold thy children," he in effect said to her, "I make them over to thee. Thou hast to love them with a mother's love; to care for them and pity them and succor them as only a mother can. See how I love them. Look in your own heart, see there my sufferings; see in those sufferings the evidence of My love and copy your love on mine." Oh marvellous love of Jesus for the souls of sinful men. That He should provide them with such a mother and at such a cost! No pang of His passion save the abandonment of His Father was so hard to bear as the piercing of His mother's soul. Yet He endured to afflict her that we might have in her a spiritual mother who would love our souls with a love only less than His own. Does He not, dear children, seem in this to have loved our souls with a love more feeling and tender than even the natural love He bore to His own blessed mother? When as yet we were sinners, Christ died for us (Rom. v, 8), and when as yet we were sinners Mary became our mother.

We should see then that by this word to Mary: "Woman, behold thy son," Jesus called her to fulfill a high and important office in the work of our salvation. He looks at us, and as He gives us the grace of prayer, the Holy Communion, so now He gives us a definite and special gift in Mary. From that word on Calvary Mary is ever to regard us as her children. She is never likely to forget that word; but we prevent her fulfilling her office if we refuse to

regard her as our mother. There is the real danger. It is especially threatening in this country. Once it was Mary's dowry—renowned throughout Christendom for its devotion to Mary; but, alas! one of its most intolerant bigotries at present is its hatred for the name of the Holy Mother of God. It is so strange a phenomenon too that one can only explain it by regarding it as a kind of obsession. They believe in Christ—there is hardly a nation that is so open in its loyalty to its Saviour and His Holy Word. How can you account for it then that the mother of the Man Christ Jesus is held in such contempt and derision? In that Bible of which they make a boast it is written that Mary said, "Behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed." Now they loudly boast that at any rate *they* don't belong to such generations. To call her blessed they will tell you is to do God a dishonor and to interfere with the worship that is due to Him alone. I wonder how these Bible Christians account for the fact that this word of Mary is in reply to one who called her blessed under the inspiration of the Holy Ghost as St. Luke tells us (i, 41). When "Elizabeth heard the voice of salutation of Mary—she was filled with the Holy Ghost and she cried out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed art thou amongst women and blessed is the fruit of thy womb. And whence is this to me that the mother of my Lord should come to me." If the Holy Ghost inspired Elizabeth to call Mary blessed (and that, too, had been the word the angel from heaven had been inspired to utter) I wonder who inspires *them* to say she is *not* blessed. As for God's honor, surely the Holy Ghost can be regarded as a safe custodian of that.

But in spite of its utter stupidity this hatred of Mary is so common and rife amongst our neighbors that there is some danger of our being so afraid of hurting their sensitiveness that we prune down

the expressions of our love for Mary almost to the vanishing point. Let us be on our guard against it. We need not be aggressive of course, but let us remember that not to love Mary as a mother and, when necessary, to show we do so, is to make very light of one of God's greatest gifts to us. He honored her Himself, surely. For thirty years he was subject to her. He knows her worth, and at the cost of greatest pain and agony both to Himself and to her He has made her our mother. And after all that, are we to be ashamed of her because some ignorant man or woman scoffs at her? Remember Father Faber's beautiful hymn:

But scornful men have coldly said
Thy love was leading me from God;
And yet in this I did but tread
The very path my Saviour trod.
They know but little of thy worth,
Who speak these heartless words to me,
For what did Jesus love on earth
One half so tenderly as thee?

So then in the spirit of grateful love to Jesus let us meditate on the gift He has given us and consider the second part of that word of His, "Behold thy mother." She is worthy of our holiest and deepest meditation. After the sacred humanity of Jesus there is no more perfect creation than the soul of Mary. She is the masterpiece of God's creative power.

Mary's sanctity began where that of God's greatest saints has ended. "Her foundations are in the holy mountains." Man has reached his highest perfection when he has won back to the estate from which he had fallen. In the beginning "man's heart was right." His mind and affections rested naturally on his Creator.

He held continual converse with his God in the garden. But disorder came with the fall, and only by an effort and for but a short time can man fix his thoughts or his love on God. After years of struggle with their evil passions, Saints have at last regained something of the ground that has been lost. They have subdued their passions and bowed their wills in almost continual obedience to God. That is their highest estate, I say, their loftiest perfection. Now where they ended, Mary began. She was born free from original sin and that sin's consequences. No cloud of ignorance obscured her understanding, no prompting of concupiscence disturbed the unruffled serenity of her heart. She ever was as Adam was before the fall, and as God's greatest saints have been in their ultimate sanctity. With the Psalmist, though in higher sense than he or any man could utter it, she could say, "To Thee from the dawn have I watched." From the dawn of her existence. From the first moment of her Immaculate Conception she looked to God. It was her singular privilege to be able to think of God and thus at the beginning to give her heart to Him. This power was indeed a privilege, but the using that privilege was her merit. We, too, have privileges and graces, not of course as great as Mary's, but level with our capacities, and the pity is we do not use them. We neglect God's grace and pay no heed to His inspirations. Here then is Mary's own work. She profited by the great powers that God had given her. From the first the grace within Her had not been void. With the full powers of her mind she thought of God, and with every affection of her heart she clung to Him. And thus it was that this exact correspondence meriting for her fresh grace to know God better and to love Him more, and by ever fresh correspondence meriting new and ever greater graces, she reached at last that height of sanctity that God, having determined to become

man, found her of all His creatures the most worthy to be His mother. This it is which gives such significance to the Church's Easter hymn, where Mary is declared to *have merited to bear her Saviour*. Thus the Immaculate Conception was a privilege which Mary could not merit. It was necessarily a free gift of God. But by corresponding with the graces of that sublime privilege Mary in a certain true sense, recognized by the Church's hymn, merited to be the Mother of God. It is moreover an added glory to our great Queen that God in conferring that surpassing dignity on Mary deigned to make it conditional on her consent. The angel has to reassure her first with regard to her humility, and then as to her virginity: and then *he awaits her answer*. Mary—think of it—Mary could have refused; God of course could have saved us in a different way. But He would not have saved us as He has done without the consent of Mary. The whole scheme of our Redemption—to put it that way—hung for a moment on the lips of Mary. All was in suspense until that humble Virgin bowed her head and said, "Behold the handmaid of the Lord, be it done unto me according to Thy word" (Lk. i, 38). Thus then shall she be honored, whom the King delighted to honor. Oh that men should read their Bibles and believe these things and then speak contemptuously of Mary. Surely we must be right in supposing it an obsession. And if Mary's sanctity and love were great beyond all thought before her Child was born, to what sublime heights of perfection must this love have attained during the three and thirty years she spent in His close companionship. From the moment she brought forth her Son and wrapped Him in swaddling clothes and laid Him in the manger, knelt and adored Him as her God, then took Him to her arms and kissed Him as her Child, to that dark hour when the world and sin had done its worst against Him and

his poor broken and lifeless Body was restored to her arms and found there its last resting place where He had found the first, surely every day and every moment of every day must have brought with it some fresh incentive to love, some new fuel for the divine fire that was consuming her. And if He advanced in wisdom, age and grace before all men, surely beyond all others in the immaculate heart of her who saw Him most and loved Him best of all.

And now the days of that close union are over. He ascends to heaven and she is left to tend the infancy of His early Church as once she tended His own. The days of her pilgrimage were prolonged and she refused not the labor—but her heart was where her treasure was in heaven. And she sighed for the time of her deliverance. Twelve long years went slowly by and then the summons came, "Behold, my beloved speaketh to me: Arise, make haste, my love, my dove, my beautiful one and come. For the winter is now past, the rain is over and gone, the flowers have appeared in our land. Arise and come" (Cf. Canticle ii, 10). "Come from Libanus; come, thou shalt be crowned" (C. iv, 8). And like a pure and spotless dove, body and soul Mary rises to meet her Saviour and her God.

Oh, look, you angels, look,
How beautiful she is.
See Jesus bears her up,
Her hand is locked in His.
Oh, who can tell the height
Of this sweet mother's bliss?

—*Faber.*

And the angels part their adoring ranks and gaze and gaze with ever increasing wonder and love as Jesus leads this marvel of His

grace higher and higher to the great white throne of God. "Who is this," they cry, "that cometh up from the desert flowing with delights leaning upon her beloved (C. 85). Who is this that ascends like a cloud of incense breathing all the powders of perfume (C. 6). Who is she that cometh forth as the morning rising, fair as the moon, bright as the sun, terrible as an army set in array" (Cf. C. vi, 9). And at last the throne of the eternal King is reached. "And the King arose to greet his mother, and a throne is set at the King's right hand and the mother of the King sat down." In her own right and title she takes her place close to the throne of God, crowned the everlasting Queen of heaven, with none save God above her, and all that is less than God immeasurably beneath her—the highest and greatest of all God's creatures—the Mother of the Son, the spouse of the Holy Ghost, the Queen of angels, the help of Christians, our tainted nature's solitary boast:

What mortal tongue can sing thy praise,
Oh Mother of the Lord?
To angels only it belongs
Thy glory to record.

For hers is the triumph not of earth, but of heaven. The triumph of God the Father, for He in whose sight the angels themselves are not pure could gaze upon the Immaculate Soul of His chosen daughter and exclaim, "Thou art all fair, oh my beloved, and there is no spot in thee." Triumph for God the Son, for in the soul of her who had given Him His human life no let or hindrance barred the absolute conquest of His precious Blood. Triumph for the Holy Ghost in that His grace had been enabled so to possess, elevate, strengthen and refine the human nature of His spouse, that, body and soul, she could live ever within the very fires of God's

divinity and not be consumed. And triumph too for Mary, that she, who in her own eyes had never been aught save the lowly handmaid of the Lord—the least of all His creatures, should now be raised to the highest throne in heaven under God, and that the greatest angels should pay to her the glad tribute of their grateful praise, and in her soul for all eternity see and acknowledge the great things which He that is mighty had done for her.

Triumph then for God, triumph for Mary and triumph for the angels—but what about ourselves? Are we, too, really to regard it as a triumph? Can Mary think of us now any longer? How can our poor sinful souls rouse any feeling but that of horror in the breast of the immaculate Queen of heaven?

And shall I lose thee then,
Lose my sweet right to thee?
Ah, no! the angels' Queen
Man's mother still will be,
And thou upon thy throne
Wilt keep thy love for me.—*Faber.*

Yes, in spite of her greatness and glory and distance from all sin, Mary will remember we are still her children. Nay, *in consequence* of that very glory, for we could say to her, were it necessary, "Not for thyself alone is all this glory, but for all the people." It is that she might plead for us with greater insistence that she is placed so near to the throne of her Son. It is that her prayers might have the greater efficacy that she has been crowned with such glory and honored with such surpassing dignity. It is for the sake of sinners that Mary is heaven's Queen. She has been appointed by God to pray for the people, and whilst there is still a soul to plead for help,

Mary would fail in her office did she turn away from his petition. When the Israelites had sinned they came to Samuel to tell him of their fall and their repentance, but they hardly dared to ask him for his prayers. His answer should encourage us: "God forbid," he said, "that I should do this sin against the Lord, that I should cease to pray for you." He would have sinned, he would have betrayed the trust God had placed in him did he cease to pray for the people even though they were in reality unworthy of his prayers. And so would it be with Mary. She would fail—fail in her office—did she refuse to pray for the humblest sinner that had recourse to her. But, my children, is it likely that she would? Jesus has said of her that her greatest glory lies in this that she "heard God's word and kept it." When the woman in the crowd lifted up her voice and praised His mother, Jesus' answer in effect was that while that was indeed a privilege, there was still greater blessedness. Rather blessed, He said, are they that hear the word of God and keep it. In the words of Jesus then—Mary's greatest glory is that best of all God's creatures she heard His word and kept it perfectly. And is it conceivable, I ask, that she should forget the word He spoke to her when she stood at the foot of the Cross? That she should so belie His praise as not to hear and not to keep the most solemn word that was ever spoken to her, "Woman, behold thy Son." But such misgivings are only suggestions from others, or from controversy, or from the devil. They have no solid foothold in our own hearts. They constitute no real doubt in our minds of the goodness of Mary or of her unwillingness to help us. Our own experience is the best refutation and gives the lie direct to all such disquieting thoughts. Mary loves us, we are sure of it, as a child is sure of his mother's love, and for the same reason—not because we deserve it or because we can prove it satisfactorily

to others—but because she is now, and has throughout our whole life always shown herself to be, our dear mother.

Full of this confidence then let me ask you now to kneel at her feet and beg her blessing on the resolutions of this retreat. Recall them to your mind whilst I in your name beg her to bless you.

PRAYER AND CONSECRATION TO MARY.

Sweet Queen of Heaven, look down from thy bright throne to-night upon thy children gathered round thy lowly shrine in this little chapel and asking thy blessing ere they go. “Woman, behold thy children.” I consecrate them with fullest confidence to thee. Let not my sins or unworthiness be a bar to thy blessing for them. Look at their need, think only of their good desire and let thy mother’s heart plead for them. They want to be thy true children, to give up all sin, to love their Heavenly Father and to have the spirit of Jesus. Dear Mother, help them. Teach them the virtues of the Sacred Heart, obedience, restraint and love. At thy knee, dear Mother, the Infant Jesus practised obedience, and for thirty years He was subject to thy sweet control. O handmaid of the Lord, teach them this great virtue. Let them know that meekness and humility must guard and preserve it if it is to last or flourish in their souls. Spouse of Holy Joseph, help them to sanctify their daily toil. Obtain that the splendor of the Lord God shine on all the work they do with a good intention. Let not the spirit of the world lead them to forget that they have not here a lasting city, but they look for one that is to come. And oh, Mother most pure, Virgin of Virgins, fragrant lily of Israel, keep them chaste. Let them look on chastity as the brightest and loveliest of all their spiritual jewels, and fill them with courage to make any sacrifice, to give up all rather than dim its radiant lustre. And, Mother of

the humble home of Nazareth, teach them to be kind. Let them resolve "never to take offence," to be the angel of their house and to cherish with special affection those whom God has given them at home. That they may do all this, teach them how to pray. Prepare their souls to receive with Faith and Desire the Body, Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus in Holy Communion, and fill their hearts with loving confidence in thy motherly protection. If only they could love thee truly, how secure would they be in life and in death.

Get me the grace to love thee more,
Jesus will grant if thou wilt plead;
And mother, when life's cares are o'er,
Oh I will love thee then indeed.—*Faber.*

Amen.

XIV. PERSEVERANCE

"I have fought a good fight; I have finished my course; I have kept the faith. As to the rest there is laid up for me a crown of Justice which the Lord the just Judge will render to me in that day, and not only to me but to them also that love His coming."—2 Tim. iv, 7, 8.

SYNOPSIS.—(1) *We should at the end of our Retreat face our future life as the Apostles faced theirs when Jesus ascended into heaven. They returned to Jerusalem with joy founded: (a) On their increased faith. Now they believed that Jesus Christ was really God. (b) On their assured hope—He had gone to prepare a place for them in heaven.*

(2) *What Jesus did for them the Retreat has done in its way for us. (a) IT HAS INCREASED OUR FAITH. We have been near to Jesus and our resolutions are based not on feelings or passing emotion, but on Faith. (b) IT HAS STRENGTHENED OUR HOPE. It has been the coming of Jesus. We have loved that coming, and have gained the crown. Now all have to hold it fast and we should joyfully strive to do so by continuing to love the coming of Jesus.*

(1) *In Prayer. A warning against Mechanical prayer.*

(2) *IN HOLY MASS. It is the continuation of the Sacrifice of Calvary for our individual sake.*

(3) *IN HOLY COMMUNION. Jesus comes to help us to lead His life, to keep our faith and to become true children of our Father in heaven.*

To those who have given their spiritual energies bravely and perseveringly as you have done, to the work of a Retreat it is almost inevitable to feel regret when it is over. The last conference can hardly hope to be cheerful. As we thought in the beginning, the Retreat has been the *coming of Jesus*. The exercises, the quiet, the seclusion, the visits to the Blessed Sacrament, the Spiritual Reading, the Conferences have all helped to bring Him very close to us and at times perhaps we have felt Him very near. And now all is over. We go back to our dull drab workaday lives once more where the bustle, the roar, the racket, the gossip, the papers, the

business, the amusements of life, all seem to combine to drive Jesus far off and leave us once again to ourselves, and to the alternating efforts and relapses which perhaps have made up your spiritual lives in the past, and have left us so dismally far behind where we might have been.

Such a feeling of sadness, I say, is almost natural, and in so far as it is evidence of the fervor of our retreat, is praiseworthy. But it will not do at all to indulge it. We must go with confidence to the fight now proposed to us or we shall never secure the victory. And this feeling is the very contradiction of confidence.

When our Lord first told his disciples that He was to leave them He had to offer them comfort and consolation, they were so disheartened. "Because I have spoken these things to you," He said, "sorrow hath filled your heart, but I tell you the truth—it is expedient to you that I go" (John xvi, 6). But when the time came and He actually left them they had no sorrow. On the contrary St. Luke tells us how at the end "He led them out as far as Bethania and lifting up His hands He blessed them. And it came to pass whilst he blessed them he departed from them and was carried up to heaven. And they adoring went back into Jerusalem with great joy" (xxiv, 50). And so by God's Providence what they had dreaded so much in the prospect turned out in the event to be for them a source of joy and encouragement. So I think should the close of this Retreat be for you. If you think of it too, you will see with me that you have the same reasons for rejoicing as the Apostles had.

For how was it that they could find joy on the day that robbed them of Jesus? It was far harder for them to lose the strength and comfort of His presence than it can ever be for us. A much sterner contest awaited them. "You shall be hated by all men for

My Name's sake." As He had been cast out despised and persecuted, so were they to be. "For the disciple is not greater than his Master. If they have persecuted Me they will also persecute you" (John xv, 20). Moreover, for three whole years they had enjoyed His constant companionship. He had been their friend, their support, their defender on all occasions. And on their side they had given up all things to be with Him. And now He had left them. Surely, I say, if there could be excuse for dejection and despondency, most certainly the disciples had that excuse. It is worth while trying to discover what it was that in spite of their loss had been such a gain to them that "they went back to Jerusalem with great joy."

The source of their joy was, I think, twofold—first their faith was increased and next their confidence was enlivened.

They understood now as they had never done before that Jesus was in very truth the Son of God. With their own eyes they had seen Him actually ascend into heaven. Lord of Heaven and Earth, Master of Life and Conqueror of Death. Who could He be but God? The Emmanuel, the Messiah? And He had lived with them! For three years He had been their constant companion. How every word and act of that gracious life, transfigured now by the glory of the Divinity, must have come back to their minds with fresh and altogether new significance. The dangers that threatened them appeared now in a new light—they assumed their proper proportions. The world had lost its terrors. They were not to face it, it is true, until they had been embued with strength from on high, but their hearts were full of the joy of certain victory. For who is He that overcometh the world but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God (John v, 5). Jesus then had heard their prayer, "Lord increase our faith," and by allowing them to witness His

ascension had so strengthened them that in the day of their trial they were strong to bear His departure bravely. The enlivening of their HOPE was another source of their joy and consolation. Up to the very end their minds had been strangely fixed on the goods of this life. The very last question they asked Him before the Ascension had been: "Lord, wilt Thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts i, 6). But now they understood it all. "My kingdom is not of this world" (John xviii, 36) had now for them its full and true significance. The hope to be the great ones of His court here was shattered finally and forever, but only to make way for the larger and more certain hope of the possession of the kingdom of their Lord hereafter. "I go to prepare a place for you," He had said, "that where I am you also may be" (John xiv, 2). They had seen Him ascend to take possession of His kingdom. And there was His clear promise to them that He had gone to prepare a place in that kingdom for them.

Here, then, we see why the Apostles found consolation even on the day of their Lord's departure from them. Their faith in His Godhead was confirmed and the hope of their own future glory was assured. And I say the retreat has brought to you the same two sources of consolation: An increase of faith and fresh assurance to your hope, and in the strength of these two favors you can and should return to your homes with the same joy that filled the Apostles when they returned to Jerusalem. As your perseverance depends so much on your starting out with joyful courage I want to convince you of this.

The retreat is above all things else a time of faith. We look at Jesus and Jesus looks at us. Almost continuously we are engaged in things that have to do with God and our souls. We remind ourselves of God's claims; we see how we have fallen short. Then we

see what we ought to be and put Jesus before us as our model. To attain His spirit is utterly beyond our power, so we throw ourselves on the mercy of our Saviour and He comes to our assistance. And so all the time we are engaged in the vital and necessary truths of faith and salvation—the only truths that we should really bother our heads about. And we see them as God sees them. The eternal truths are not put before us as they sometimes are in novels and plays and magazine articles. No, Jesus speaks with authority. And in the light of this teaching we set our house in order and make our resolutions for the future. Now I ask you to pay especial attention to this point. We base our resolution on the teaching of faith. Jesus Christ is as truly God for us as He was for His Apostles. And it is in the light of His guidance and example that we draw up our plans for the future. Now the common temptation that draws people back to their hopeless and spiritless life of what is called “decent debility,” if indeed it is no worse, is the suggestion from the devil that our retreat resolutions are not to be taken too seriously. It is well enough to make such resolutions. They are a recognized part of the retreat routine. But—so the temptation whispers—now the retreat is over and life becomes normal again one really can not be asked to make Ten Commandments of them. They were taken in a state of excitement and fervor when we were carried out of ourselves and hardly realized what we were undertaking. Common sense and every-day life must prune them down for us to what is practical, and save us from appearing ridiculous and attempting the extraordinary. And so, alas! common sense and every-day life and Mrs. Grundy between them prune them down to a vanishing point, and what might have been the real and fruitful result of a good retreat is voted outside the range of practical politics.

Now here it is that faith comes to help us if we would only let it. It reminds us that it is simply not true to say that retreat resolutions are based on religious excitement. Never in our lives do we judge of sacred and vital things with calmer or fuller deliberation. We see such things perhaps for the first time from, as far as may be, God's point of view. We try at any rate to see them as He sees them—that is, to see them in truth and as they are. And then carefully weighing their importance and our possibilities, we make our resolutions. These are then the outcome of our faith, and have nothing to do with mere religious nervousness. We can say with the Psalmist: "I have believed, therefore have I spoken" (Ps. 115). It is the influence of the devil, the world and the flesh that afterwards warps our judgment. And we are letting ourselves be hoodwinked by the devil when we allow a temptation, a sneer or sensuality to influence us to break a retreat resolution. No, let us make up our minds, here and now, to be firm and unwavering. Our salvation may be bound up with the way we keep the resolutions we have made this week. When temptations come let our answer be: God has inspired me to make these resolutions. I will not be so untrue to God and to myself as to allow a passing whim, a sudden fiery blast of passion, or the sneer of men or women who never give religion a serious thought to cause me to break them. I was as the beggar at Jericho, blind and helpless when Jesus came to me in this retreat. Thank God I loved His coming. I cried to Him from out the depths of my misery, "Lord, that I may see." And He has heard. "Receive thy sight," He has said to me, "*thy faith* hath made thee whole." And I saw at least something of my misery and at least something of the infinite mercy of God, and in this light I am resolved to follow after in the footsteps of Jesus as far as His Grace will allow glorifying God.

It is faith, then, that gives you the assurance that God has spoken to you that the words and example of Jesus are the words and example of the God-made Man, and armed with that faith you become sharers in the strength of the Apostles and can scorn your enemies. "For who is he that overcometh the world but he that believes that Jesus is the Son of God." Be resolved, then, first of all to be true to the sacred promises God has inspired you to make during this retreat. Have no fear and reject all compromise. "Let us run by patience to the fight proposed looking on Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith" (Heb. xii, 1, 2).

The second cause of the Apostles, joy—their hope, namely, of the throne that Jesus had gone to prepare for them, we can also share with them. "There is laid up for me," says the text, "a crown of justice which the Lord will render to me on that day, and not to me only, but to all them that love His coming." Now the retreat has been, as we have thought, the coming of Jesus. And by the way you have made it, making your confession, approaching each day to Holy Communion, following the instruction and all the exercises with piety and recollection, all this has proved that you have loved that coming. On the word of the Apostle, then, I can assure you that there is a crown in heaven laid up for you now. Were you to die to-day, what would be the greeting of Jesus to you? He has said Himself He will say to the just, "Come, ye blessed of My Father, possess ye the kingdom prepared for you." That kingdom, that crown, is *there*, prepared, made ready, awaiting you now. I can not see it, and you can not see it. But Jesus can see it. And Mary, your Mother, can see it; your Angel guardian, your Name Saints can see it and know it is kept for you. And those who are near and dear to you, a father or mother, a relation or friend, who have gone before you in the faith these can see, that now you have

won your crown and there it is ready awaiting you. I am urging this feeling upon you because as it induces the joyous confidence of the Apostles it helps the soul very materially in the arduous work of perseverance. For as we know very well "the end is not yet," our time may not come for years. And the great question we have all to face is this: When that time does come, will our "crown be rendered to us in that day?" The doubtful factor in the situation is not the Power and is not the Goodness of God, but it lurks in the fickleness of our own will. Now I say, to encourage and strengthen that will it is important to remember that a great deal has already been done. That the initial difficulty has been, so to speak, successfully negotiated; and that your spiritual attitude now is no longer that of one striving to gain something that one has not got, but rather that of retaining what one already has. To you now the advice in the Apocalypse can encouragingly be given: "Hold fast that which thou hast that no one take thy crown" (Apoc. iii, 11).

So then it is with that confident feeling that we are *to hold the crown we have already gained* that we are to face the future. Now how are we to do this? The answer is quite simple: we are to hold our crown by the same means we used to gain it, viz., "by loving the coming of Jesus." What does this mean? When does Jesus come to us? Well, he comes to us especially on three occasions—in prayer, at Holy Mass, and in Holy Communion. Love His coming then at these times, and ask our Lady to help you with her own eagerness and love to welcome Jesus, and I am sure you will secure your crown at the end.

Let us see what it means. In the first place with regard to prayer, we have thought of this already and have resolved to be faithful to night and morning prayer especially. It is not so much this or that *devotion* that is particularly needed, as the *spirit of habit*

of prayer. Night and morning prayers will be of no avail unless your soul is prepared already by a prayerful disposition and willingness to pray. We must remember Jesus is present when we pray and we must learn to love His coming. The great evil of the danger of mechanical prayer was very vividly impressed on my mind once by an incident that happened during a little mission in—of all places in the world—a small country town in Ireland. The other Father was preaching the evening sermon and I went to visit a man—almost the only one in the village that was not attending the mission. His wife was in great trouble about him—and well she might be. And one time it would have been hard to find a better Catholic anywhere. He was at Mass and at all the church services regularly. He went frequently to his duties; and he said prayers night and morning with his wife every day of his life. Then suddenly all was changed with him. He remained as sober, honest and industrious as ever. He was as good and kind to his wife and neighbors as he always had been—but he simply gave up prayer. He would not go to Mass or the Mission or to church at all. He never went on his knees himself nor would he let his wife do so in his presence. It was almost dusk when I got to him and he took me in at once in quite a friendly way to a little dark room at the back of his shop. He was all alone, for they had no children. He told me quite plainly how things stood with him spiritually. He was well instructed in his religion and believed in it he said as well as I did myself. But he said he had made up his mind that it was wrong to pray. Does not God know my soul already without my telling Him? If He sees anything wanting to me He can give it to me if He likes or He can refuse it. It is His affair, I am quite satisfied, and therefore I have no need to ask for anything. I told him of course that as he believed in Christ he ought to be-

lieve in prayer. "Ask and you shall receive," I said, was Christ's own word. And He has taught us the Our Father. Just as I said that the church bell began to ring. It was a sign—as you know if you have attended mission—that the people in the church were saying the five Our Fathers and five Hail Marys in honor of the five wounds for the conversion of sinners. I stopped and said to him, "Do you know what they call that bell?" "No," he answered. "Well," I said, "that is the sinners' bell and they are praying in church for those who are missing the mission. That means," I said, "they are praying especially for you. Come, now let us pray with them." I pulled out my beads and touching him on the knee I knelt down beside his chair and began the Our Father out loud. Well, now the moment I did so the change that came over that unfortunate man was appalling. He jumped up when I touched him as though he had been bitten by a serpent. He rushed to the other side of the room, and there holding out his hands against me and turning his face from me. "No! No! No!" he cried. "Get up! Get up! No prayers here—no prayers in this house. We have been good friends up to now, but if you don't get off your knees I tell you we shall be good friends no longer." He really seemed beside himself. I got up and tried to soothe him, but it was useless. I had to leave him. He would not speak another word to me.

Now my point is that that man had been saying prayers for years morning and night with his wife. Kneeling side by side with her he had used the same words and externally at all events had prayed exactly as she had done. Yet she continued holy and he seemed to have fallen so utterly away from grace that I never in my life knew one who gave such little hope of his salvation. If he did not pray, surely he was lost. The devil had no need to tempt him to other sins. Unless God by a miracle, in answer to the

prayers of the poor afflicted wife, rescued him, he seemed already to have given himself over to final impenitence. Now how was it? The only answer can be that all along he had been praying as one tempting God. It was at best "lip service," he was praying to his Creator, and God did not accept it. Do not then be satisfied with saying so many words to God. See that you say them properly. Remember prayer is the raising of the mind and heart to God. Jesus comes to you in prayer. Raise, then, your mind and heart to greet Him, and thus will you help on the work of your perseverance by loving the coming of Jesus.

Next Jesus comes in Holy Mass. When the words of consecration are said we believe that He is here upon the altar and we believe that He is here to continue the Sacrifice of Calvary. Faith teaches us it is one and the same Sacrifice. There is no bloodshedding, it is true; no torture of the body or soul, and only the mystical death—but it is the same Sacrifice for all that and for this reason: What made the Crucifixion of Christ a sacrifice was the offering of the Sacred Heart of all the sufferings and death to His Father for us men and our salvation. Without that offering there would have been no Sacrifice. Now that is just what takes place at Holy Mass. The same Sacred Heart is here making that same offering. Jesus is the Lamb that was slain but continues to plead for us—ever living to make intercession for us. The Lamb standing slain—offering His sufferings and death for us until the consummation of the world, and when we are present at Mass the offering is especially for us. Jesus lets us use His Sacrifice as though it were our own. Through Him and with Him and in Him we can do the great works God has made us to do on earth. We can adore God. We can say "I am so great a sinner before Thee that I am not worthy to raise my eyes to heaven. But here I offer Thee the

Adoration of that Son in whom Thou art well pleased." And by so doing we give to God an act of worship more adequate and more pleasing than is or could ever be the Adoration of our blessed Lady, and that of all the Angels and Saints of heaven combined. For literally we give to God the Adoration of a God-made man. We can give thanks—a distinct and definite duty and one so little thought of that the Apostle more than a dozen times calls attention to it in his epistles. "What shall I render to the Lord for all he hath rendered unto me, I will take the Chalice of Salvation and I will call upon the name of the Lord" (Ps. cxv, 12). Here is the very Chalice of Salvation which our Lord Himself used in thanksgiving at the Last Supper. "Taking the Chalice," we are told, "He blessed and gave thanks."

We ask pardon for sin. For here is that Precious "Blood which was shed for the remission of sin" (Matt. xxvi, 28). "O God," we can cry. "For the Blood of Jesus have mercy on me. Through the merits of that Blood which I here offer Thee, pardon me my sins." And we ask for Grace. Jesus is pleading here, and we can offer that pleading of His as though it were our own. Let us rouse our faith; to adore, to give thanks, to ask for pardon, and to ask for grace are the great works, works we have to do in this world. And here in Holy Mass Jesus does these perfectly and does them for us. Here He gives glory to God and peace on earth to men of good will. He does our works for us and all our ways are peace. If we but realized this, surely we should love the coming of Jesus at the moment of Consecration and eagerly avail ourselves not only of the Mass of obligation, but of every opportunity that presented itself of being present at this adorable Sacrifice.

And lastly we must love the coming of Jesus in Holy Communion. Of this great subject I have spoken at length already. It only re-

mains for me now to recommend it to you as a great means of perseverance. On Easter Sunday, the general Communion day of the Church, Priests are ordered to read at the Epistle the inspired words of St. Paul to the Corinthians: "Christ, our Pasch, is sacrificed. Therefore let us not feast with the old leaven, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. Christ sacrificed for us in the Mass becomes in the Holy Communion (as the food of our souls) the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. He comes to fill us with His spirit—the spirit which animated Him when He declared to Pontius Pilate: "For this was I born; for this came I into the world that I might give testimony of the truth." Hitherto perhaps our great failing has been want of sincerity. Like the Apostles we needed our Lord's warning. "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees which is hypocrisy." Not *conscious* *hypocrisy* so much as that spirit which strives to please the world and yet is persuaded it is serving God. This is impossible. "You can not serve God and Mammon," and "He that is not with Me is against Me." Cast out that old leaven—this worldly spirit. Receive Jesus in Holy Communion—every day of your life if you are able. "He that eateth Me, the same also shall live by Me." He will fill you with the Spirit of truth to enable you by your whole life to proclaim the truth that God is the Lord and Master and Father of us all, whom it is our highest duty as it is our truest happiness to serve. Love the coming of Jesus in Holy Communion. For to them that received Him to them He gave power to become the children of God.

To sum up. The retreat has been for you the **coming** of Jesus. You have looked at the Sacred Heart and have learned there the virtues of the Spirit of Jesus. And you have profited by your retreat. You have loved the coming of Jesus—and so you have

won your crown. Now, to hold fast that which you have, to persevere to the end, ask our Lady to enable you always to love the coming of Jesus in prayer, in Mass, and in Holy Communion, for in proportion to your doing that with faith will be your right to take comfort and find strength in the Apostle's words: "There is laid up for me a crown of justice which the Lord the Just Judge will render to me in that day, and not to me only but to all them that love His coming."

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